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THE YOUNG ZEMINDÁR;

HIS ERRATIC WANDERINGS AND EVENTUAL
RETURN:

*Being a Record of Life, Manners, and Events in Bengal of between Forty
and Fifty Years ago.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

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Author of "The Wild Tribes of India," &c.

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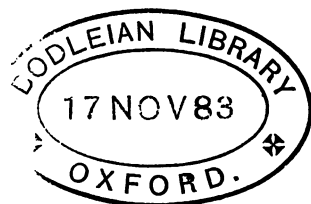
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TO THE MEMORY
OF THE
WELL-BELOVED DEAD;
LONG LOST,
NEVER FORGOTTEN,
THESE VOLUMES ARE
MOST
AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED.





THE YOUNG ZEMINDÁR.

CHAPTER I.

THE RÁIS OF BONÁ GHÁT.

THERE is a place named Boná Ghát, on the banks of the Bhetná Nuddee, in Pergunnáh Datteáh, of 24 Pergunnáhs, in the province of Bengal, which is well situated, and surrounded on all sides by a fairly cultivated and flourishing country. It is now a small and almost insignificant village, but in times past was the head-quarters of a family of Ráis, or Zemindárs, who had the reputation of great wealth and power, several of the members being further described as being good and

humane landlords, who did much service in their day to the poor. The story about them says that they possessed a fort and a palace in the village, which were occupied by the family for nearly a century, and the remains of the first were yet traceable on the ground during the earlier years of the English power, though scarcely attesting at that time to the might or affluence which the building had originally symbolised. The palace, or residence of the Ráis seems to have been rebuilt some forty years ago, and is yet standing ; but its present condition is very ruinous, owing to the family having since got poor, and being now represented by some minor children only, whose guardians, in the usual native fashion, have enriched themselves at the expense of their wards. The more remarkable peculiarities of the

village to this day are, a large mango-grove, commencing from a short distance to the west of the Zemindár's house, and extending over nearly fifty acres of land, several tanks of clean and wholesome water, and the neighbourhood of the Nuddee referred to, all which advantages together render the spot too well-fitted for the purposes of a fair for that circumstance to have been overlooked. Markets are accordingly held at the place on two days of the week, besides which a *Melá* is celebrated there annually during the *Bárooni* festival in March, which goes by the name of the *Dewán's Melá*, on the following account.


The Zemindárs of Boná Ghát were Bráhmans, descended from Bhatta Náráyana of the Sándilya family, the chief of the five pure Bráhmans who came to Bengal from

Kanouj, and from whom the Rájáhs of Nuddeá also claim their descent. The founder of the family was one Bistoo Hurry Sándyal, who came to Boná Ghát with the intent of leading the life of an anchorite there. But his son, Srimanta, who was of a more pugnacious character, having followed him thither, succeeded in a short time to secure all the wealth of the Pergunnáh by various means, after which he got his usurpations confirmed by the Nawáb of Moorshedábád, who was glad to accept the presents that were offered to him, accompanied as they were by a promise of an increased *Kházáná*, or revenue, for the imperial treasury.

The fifth in succession to Srimanta was Hullothur Sándyal, who rendered great services to the Nawáb, in connection with

the Mahrattá incursions, and, having amassed an immense fortune during those disturbances, was enabled to augment his ancestral estate still further by buying up and adding thereto the estates of several defaulting Zemindárs. The title of Rái was now conferred on him by the Nawáb for his services to the State, and this was assumed by the family in place of the sept name of "Sándyal," which had intermediately become plebeian; and the palace and fortress at Boná Ghát were both erected by Hullodhur, with the express permission of the Nawáb.

We need not follow the family history of the Ráis further. Rughoonáth Rái was the Zemindár of Boná Ghát when the battle of Plassey was fought and lost, and, as all the adherents of the Nawáb were obliged to fly, Rughoonáth with his family proceeded in the



direction of Dhumrail, in the hope of cutting his way through the Soonderbuns to Jagganáth. Whether he did reach Jagganáth or not was never known, for no tidings of his arrival there were ever received at Boná Ghát. The wife of the pilgrim was overtaken with the pains of labour on the banks of the Kool-kooli *Nulláh*, on the borders of the Soonderbuns, upon which she was deserted by her husband and left to her fate, and, being shortly after delivered of a boy, lay with her child in a dense jungle helpless and alone.

Both the mother and child would have been inevitably destroyed by wild beasts but for having been accidentally discovered by a kind-hearted *Goáláh*, or herdsman, named Nobin, who had come to the spot in search of his cows, just when the lady had recovered

her senses and was looking uncomfortably about herself. She was prevailed upon by him to take refuge with her son in his house in the absence of any better place to go to; and in the course of a few years Kooláye Goáláh, the reputed son of Nobin, became a strapping cowherd, respected and feared by other cowherd boys of the same age.

Within these ten or twelve years the British *Ráj* had been fully established all over Bengal, and the wife of Rughoonáth, not having heard from her husband, thought it high time now to go back to Dátteáh in the interests of her son.

“What do you want to go to Dátteáh for?” asked Nobin, when the matter was broached to him. “Have you any friends in that quarter?”

“Yes, we had relations and friends there,”

said the lady, "but do not know whether they are living or dead. My son is shooting up into youth, and I want to introduce him to my uncle, who was a well-to-do *Chássa* of Boná Ghát."

The lady still kept the secret of her former life she hardly knew wherefore. She was afraid that things had gone wrong both at Dátteáh and with the fugitive Zemindár. Why should poor Kooláye Chánd then know anything whatever in respect to his real position in life, merely to get discontented with his present lot?

"It is well to go and know the worst of it now, if only to be relieved of the suspense that has been weighing so heavily on us," thought the lady to herself. "We shall be able to shape our future course better after the mystery that envelopes us has been

cleared up." And she went forward accordingly with a resolute heart, accompanied by Nobin and her son.

They reached Boná Ghát with various feelings, the Zemindár's lady in expectation and silence, but quite unable to arrange her thoughts; Nobin watching her face thoughtfully, but without being able to read her heart; Kooláye Chánd, with the usual hilarity of his years, enjoying himself as boys only can whenever there is anything new to look at or hunt for.

"Well, we have arrived at Boná Ghát at last," said Nobin, "and fortunately before nightfall. The *Gurh* and the palace of the Ráis are before us. In what direction do we go now to find out the relative you seek?"

"I really do not know," said the Zemindár's lady, with a sigh, looking steadfastly at

her family residence, which was gradually becoming undistinguishable in the gloom.

“Can we not make inquiries of him at the big house before us?”

They groped their way up accordingly to the Zemindár's house, and noiselessly pushed open the outer gate, but the building was tenantless, and it was considered unsafe to enter it at that hour.


“Since we don't exactly know where this friend of yours lives it would be best, I think,” said Nobin, “to take up our quarters for the night at the village inn, if there be any such place here;” and, this being agreed to, they went back to the public road, and pursued it till they came to a *Moodi's* shop, which represented a lodging-house for strangers. The proprietor was accommodating, and gave them a couple of small rooms

to rest in, and, as they were tired with their day's journey, they were very anxious to go to sleep. One of the rooms was therefore quickly taken up by the lady and her son, and the other by Nobin, who got a lamp from the *Moodi* and placed it at a door which joined the two apartments.

"Ha! whom have we here?" exclaimed the *Moodi*, who had followed Nobin, and was looking attentively at the lady's face. "O, my honoured mistress, are you come home at last, and in such plight as this?"

"Are you quite sure that you know me?" asked the lady in excessive fright. "Who do you take me for that you address me as your mistress?"

"Who do I take you for? Who can I take you for, but your own good self, and the owner of all these estates?"



Every feature, every line of your kind face is imprinted in our recollections. You have become older and thinner now than before, but you are our own dear mother still, and can never, never be forgotten by us."

There was no denying the honour further ; the poor have very retentive memories, and the virtues of the Zemindár's lady had made her servants her friends. The *Moodi* had been one of her household lackeys, and this the lady recollected just as much as he remembered the mistress he had served.

The story of the lady and her son was listened to with intense interest by the whole village of Boná Ghát on the following morning, and Kooláye Chánd had no difficulty in assuming possession of his ancestral estates and importance. Nobin offered to return to his obscurity and a herdsman's life, but this

neither Kooláye Chánd nor his mother would permit. They made him the Zemindár's *Dewán*, and after his death the *Melá* we have spoken of was established to commemorate his worth.

CHAPTER II.

THE DEWÁN'S MELÁ.

WE must here at the very commencement take a leap over sixty years and more, to introduce the reader to the eventful period of 1831, when the young Zemindár of that day, Monohur Rái, the great-grandson of Kooláye Chánd Rái, had just attained his majority, or the age of eighteen, and was bent on solemnising the event along with the *Dewán's Melá*, which had fallen in at the same time, with the greatest *éclat*. He was a fine specimen of a high-bred Bengali youth, of slim but wiry build, with an expressive and handsome face scarcely disfigured by a pair of small and deep-set eyes, and having many

good qualities of the heart, mixed unfortunately with an intense, or immoderate, love for frolics and adventures.

“I am determined to make the present *Melá* an immense success,” said he, “so that it may never cease to be remembered, and you must not scold me for that, mother mine.”

“Be it so,” replied the mother, a lady thirty-five or thirty-six years old, of rather delicate features, but having a peculiar air of amiability and truthfulness about her, blended with a slight tinge of sadness for her widowed state. “But take care, my son, that you do not mark it with any discredit to your house and family-name.”

“Pooh, mother! Have I not become a big man now, and don’t I know how to uphold the family honours? You will soon hear

from all sides how well the people will speak of me; and won't you be proud, ma, of having such a youth for your son?"

"Heaven bless and prosper you in everything, Monohur," returned the lady, with a sad, sweet smile. "But I am sure it would please me better to see you applying to your work as diligently as your ancestors did, than that you should be going about gathering praises from the mob at a *Melá*. Empty praises from the mass must not turn your young head, my son. You run so frequently after frolics and adventures that you really do alarm me at times."

"O, mother dear! just look down on the mango-grove yonder and see what a multitude of men have assembled there to celebrate my majority day. Can you possibly disapprove of my furthering their enjoyment to the best

of my power when they have met so eagerly, solely for the purpose of welcoming me as their lord and master? We shall have business, pleasure, frolic, and adventures all in concert there, and, surely, they can be united together in a *Melá*. Can they not?"

"Yes, to a certain extent they can," answered the lady; "but the present is no fit occasion for frolic and pleasure, and all business cannot be associated with them, as you seem to think, Monohur. Some very important matters have suddenly and unexpectedly thrust themselves forward into notice which demand our immediate attention, and it is very unfortunate indeed that the *Melá* jumps up just at this particular time."

"O mother! we cannot defer the *Melá*,

you know, for it has certain days, and those only, fixed for it. But your other business, of whatever importance, can surely lie over for the time—for only three short days, dear mother—after which I shall be as wholly attentive to it as you yourself may direct.”

Saying this he bounced out of the house almost without waiting for his parent to reply, to superintend the *Melá* preparations on which his whole heart was set, and which, sooth to say, were not very indifferently regarded by the lady herself, for all the brave words she had spoken to her son.

It was a grand *Melá*, and an immense multitude, variously reckoned at between ten and fifteen thousand persons, were congregated within the mango-grove to celebrate it. There were all kinds of men among them, from the *Chássá* and the cowherd, who

had taken short leave of their fields, to the Hindu *Mohunt*, and the Mahomedan *Fakir* who had emerged from their retreats to take part in the festivity; and even the village girls and matrons had ceased working for the time at their *Dhenki* and with the *Koolá*,* though such immunity from labour falls rarely to their lot. The Zemindár had offered to provide accommodation and convenience for all who came, and had spared no expense in doing justice to what he had undertaken.

From an early hour all was astir and animation on the part of his people throughout the grove, and while several places were got ready with seats and canopies for the convenience of the more respectable visitors when they got tired of walking over the grounds, booths

* i.e. at threshing corn.

were erected in different directions for distributing sweetmeats and fruits among those who might seek for them, and others for the grant of largesses of money among the Bráhmans and the poor. One central spot, provided with a dais and a rich canopy over it, was especially reserved for the Zemindár; and the birds of the grove gave a charm to the tree-tops around it, preferring its neighbourhood to all others for reasons best known to themselves, and adding therefrom their melodious voices to soften, as it were, the general clamour arising from every side.

There was business and pleasure certainly united at the *Melá*, as the boy Zemindár had unthinkingly asserted, the first being represented by the products of the country brought to it for sale, and the second by the

amusements which were generally indulged in. Here were displayed paddy and grains of diverse sorts; there *ghee*, oil, sugar, molasses, fruits and vegetables, curds and sweetmeats; and, further on again, clothes, mats, pottery, straw and bamboo ware, brass ornaments, and metal utensils of all kinds—everything, in fact, which was in use in, or could be useful to, village life. But even the sellers of the articles were not engrossed in clearing their bargains, for the games and amusements of the *Melá* were shared in by them almost as eagerly as by the rest. The boys of tender age were playing *Jore-ke-bejore* (odd or even) with great earnestness; bigger lads were intent on the games of *Bágbandi* and *Mongul-Páthán*; yet bigger ones were either for *Nooko-Chooree* or *Hádoo-gádoo*, the latter known elsewhere as the *Kabádi*. The

men were similarly playing *Páshá*, cards, or *Satranchi*, particularly those who had brought goods to the fair for sale ; while thorough idlers were amusing themselves with the *Beená* and the *Shitár*, the *Behálá*, *Tublá*, and *Mirdung*, not a few finding relief even in the discordant music of the *Dholuk*, the *Kánsi*, and the *Shánáye*. And the enjoyment was unrestrained and noisy, as such enjoyments always are.

The Zemindár, attired in holiday clothes, and with a walking-stick in his hand, strolled over the whole ground, inspecting almost every arrangement with care, while the eyes of all were drawn on him kindly and respectfully as they made room for him in whichever direction he went. He was smiles and attention to everybody, and listened patiently to every suggestion that was made for either augmenting or prolong-

ing the amusement; and the people were charmed by his manners and condescension, and praised him with hearty untiring cheers.

The rejoicings were continued for three whole days, and were resolving into revelry, when the Zemindár's manager, or *Surburákár*, came forward to suggest that it was time now to put an end to the fair. He was an old servant of the family, who had more of his will at present than he ever had when his late master was alive, for Monohur's mother had the most implicit confidence in his management.

"We had better break up now," said he to Monohur, in a suggesting tone. "We have had the usual three days' amusement already, and business of great importance has been accumulating which has to be attended to."

"What business, Nilkant? Why should any business interfere with the natural

frolics of the day? You look as if you had something of great moment to unfold. What is it about?"

"Very bad news has come to us from Pergannáhs Ánoorpoor and Balleáh, where our neighbours, the Mahomedans, are, it is said, becoming restive, and we have not always been on the best terms with them."

"You look more gloomy over the news than I have seen you do on greater fears. Are you afraid of the Mahomedans much?"

"No, not afraid of them exactly; but the information received relates to matters of serious importance, and requires very careful sifting, and—and—I would not care to speak further about them in the open air."

The Zemindár looked dissatisfied, the more so perhaps that his servant was so reticent; but, still heedless of the warning *given to him*, he separated himself from his

would-be mentor, and pierced further into the midst of the mango-tope, in the direction of the dais erected for his reception. Here he was closely followed and accosted by a religious mendicant, who had so put on his headgear as almost entirely to conceal his features. He had the outward appearance of a Mahomedan *Fakir*, but might well have been mistaken for a Hindu *Mohunt*, or a beggar of any race.

“What was that old servant of yours speaking to you about, sir?” asked he of the Zemindár.

“I really don’t know; I hardly understood what he said. He spoke of some Mahomedan doings at Anoorpoor and Balleáh, which I don’t care to know of to-day.”

“You need not listen to what he says. The *Melá* is over; let it break up. If you will give me a private hearing I shall tell you

something that should be of advantage to you."

"Who art thou, father, and what business can you have with me? I can hardly understand why my affairs should interest you, you being a Mahomedan, apparently, and I a Hindu."

"Ah, I am an anchorite, and was dead to this world for twenty years. If I have come back to it since it is because my Master requires my services further. But I cannot indicate the direction in which I can serve you unless you give me a private hearing."

"Really, all this is perfectly unintelligible to me," said the perplexed youth, speaking rather displeasedly to himself, but loud enough to be heard by those immediately around him. "There is my manager hints to me of important disclosures which must be confidently made. Here turns up a Mahome-

dan *Fakir* and demands a private ear. I have, surely, no time for either at present; but when the fair is over I shall be at the service of both."

So saying he bowed his head courteously towards the *Fakir*, and passed on through the tope as unconcernedly as before. He was a young man, barely escaped from boyhood, and could hardly be expected to prefer business to pleasure so soon, especially to such pleasure as now monopolised his mind.

"I must get him quickly married," said his mother to herself, after listening to the grumblings of the *Surburákár*. "He is too wild to be kept loose, and must be speedily harnessed."

Ah, mother dear ! your colt is too unruly to bear the harness yet. He must sow his wild oats before he will allow of being controlled.

CHAPTER III.

THE FIRST EXERCISE OF AUTHORITY.

THERE was a *Muktab*, or Mahomedan school, in the outskirts of Boná Ghát for imparting instruction to Mahomedan youths in Arabic, and this became a scene of great confusion one morning a short time after the breaking up of the *Melá*, from a dispute having occurred in it between two students named Abdool Gohur and Syed Jooman, respectively. They were both of them good scholars, and often had arguments with each other on learned questions. But on the present occasion from arguments they came to altercation, and from altercation to abuse, which was followed by a scuffle; and, when

the combatants were parted, it was discovered that Abdool Gohur had received a wound on the side from a knife which was lying on the ground.

“How fearful these Mahomedans are!” exclaimed the Zemindár’s mother, when the matter was reported to her. “I trust the wounded youth has not since succumbed under his wound?”

“No, madam, not up to this time at least,” said the *Surburákár*. “But the fellow who used the knife was not the less a ruffian for the narrow escape of his victim, and has to be brought to account for what he has done.”

“Ah, that of course,” said the lady; “but what was the subject under discussion between them which led to the stabbing? Have we any information on that point?”

“None,” said the *Surburákár*. “One of the contending parties is said to be a Ferázee, and the other not, and they were probably sparring about those very tenets of which we have heard so much lately from Pergunnáh Balleáh. What we have to do now is simply to send the Zemindár to the spot, for, as he is a resident Zemindár, the Government will expect him to make a personal inquiry into the matter, after which he has to make over one or both the combatants to the district authorities.”

“Then must Monohur perform his duty in the way you point out,” said the mother ; “but I shall await his return from the place with some anxiety.”

“Why ? What for, mother ?” exclaimed Monohur. “What is there to be anxious for ?”

“Nothing, certainly,” answered the lady ;

“but I always feel uncomfortable when we have anything to do with our Mahomedan ryots. Go and perform your duty by all means, my son; but don’t forget to return to me as soon as the work is over.”

This was the first occasion on which the young Zemindár had been called upon to exercise his authority formally, and he went out with a brave assumption of the honours of his post. He had a small following with him, and was very respectfully received at the *Muktab*, having won golden opinions already even from the Mahomedans by his behaviour at the *Melá*.

“He looks very much like his father,” observed a gray-bearded Moslem as he came forward to make his obeisance to him, “and has the same broad forehead, and the same bright eyes.”

"I trust he has the same large heart also," remarked another, "for our deceased lord had a generous and feeling heart."

"There can be no doubt of that," said a third, "for his heart is in his face, and that is very kindly and fair."

The manner in which the Zemindár commenced his inquiries also gave satisfaction. He asked questions pleasantly, listened attentively to what was said in reply, and cross-examined the speakers with much acumen and intelligence.

"You have received a knife wound, Abdool Gohur. Let me see the wound."

"Here it is, sir," said the student, tucking up his *koortá*. "It is very slight, and scarcely worth being examined by yourself."

"You don't think it was accidental; do you?"

"I don't know, sir. It may have been so ; and probably was."

"You did not anticipate or expect it from Jooman? You were never on bad terms with him before?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"Has the knife been identified?"

"Yes, sir," said one of the bystanders. "Syed Jooman has acknowledged it as belonging to him."

"Nor does he deny having inflicted the wound," put in another of the bystanders, who was no other than our old friend the *Fakir* who had accosted the Zemindár at the *Melá*. "But this is a matter which the students might well be left to settle between themselves. There is little necessity for the Zemindár to trouble himself about it."

"No, no, that won't do," said the

Surburákár, who formed one of the party that had accompanied Monohur to the *Muktab*. "The case is a criminal one, and the Zemindár must perform his duty and make over the offender to the police."

"To the police!" exclaimed the *Fakir*, with affected surprise. "And whereabouts then is this police? See, Zemindár *Mohásoy*, that thin, ragged *Chuprássi* standing in the background there, whom any one of your peons might eat up when hungry, represents the police to which your *Surburákár* says you ought to make over the student. Is not the proposal silly on the face of it? Will you submit to do that?"

"Why not?" again interposed the *Surburákár*. "This is a very serious business. Two students in a private seminary quarrel with each other, and one uses a knife against

. the other. We don't know but that the wounded youth may yet die from the effects of the wound, though he seems to think so lightly of it at present; and what would the Government say to the Zemindár if he did not secure and make over the homicide into custody while having it in his power to do so?"

The *Fakir* did not even condescend to look at the *Surburákár* while he spoke so volubly, but, addressing the Zemindár, said—

"You, sir, are the *de facto* Rájáh, or king, of these parts, and why should you make over any case from your jurisdiction to what your manager calls the 'Government,' which has no position anywhere, and cannot enforce its authority of itself? This is a mere school-squabble. The wound, you have seen, is only slightly deeper than a mere scratch.

Even the youth who has been wounded does not wish for the punishment of his offending comrade. Why should you not inflict some nominal punishment, if any, and terminate the case?"

"Don't think of that," urged again the Zemindár's *Surburákár*. "We must not dream of ignoring the authority of the Government from which that of the Zemindár is derived; and don't you mind the suggestions of such a beggarly counsellor as yonder fellow, who, under his tattered clothing, seems to hide some deep design of his own."

The *Surburákár* looked hard at the *Fakir's* face as he spoke; but the latter only smiled contemptuously in reply, without vouchsafing a single word to him in return. He only winked at the Zemindár, and then, suddenly coming up to him, said—

"I have been waiting to have a word with

you. Do give me a private hearing when this case is over."

The case was disposed of very leniently by the Zemindár. This was his first exercise of authority, and he was too young yet to wish to act with severity. His decision was, in fact, just what the *Fakir* had suggested it should be.

"There is no malice proved against Syed Jooman, though he used the knife," said the Zemindár. "He simply acted without forethought, and as even his adversary does not wish for his punishment, and as the wound does not threaten to assume a serious character, it is hardly necessary to send up the case to the magistrate;" and the *Chowkey-dár*, who had received his hush-money from the friends of Syed Jooman, grinned approval of the Zemindár's decision.

The *Surburákár* was red hot with wrath,

and walked off from the place at once to the Zemindár's mother, but he was not accompanied by the Zemindár. Monohur Rái had promised a private conference with the *Fakir*, and, having sent away his followers in different directions, proceeded with him alone into the mango-grove, which was almost contiguous to the *Muktab*.

"How far do you want me to go with you?" asked Monohur of the man.

"O, a few paces only," was the reply; "to such a spot as will not expose us to the risk of being overheard."

The *Fakir* was an elderly man with a stooping head and a sunken chest, and the Zemindár had no harm to apprehend from him personally.

"I cannot guess what he can have to say to me," communed Monohur with himself,


“but it does not look as if he had any sinister intent against me, and it is certain that he isn’t an unsafe person for one of my inches to go with ;” and so the two went together into the gloomiest part of the tope.

What they talked of has not been reported to us, but Monohur did not return from the conference at once to his expecting mother. A good understanding was established between the Zemindár and the *Fakir*, but there was still a point of difference between them ; and this point was referred for settlement, not to the Zemindár’s mother or to his *Surburákár*, but to the most powerful Hindu divinity of the place, speaking through the lips of his *Sabáit*.* This deity was named Nággesur Mahádeva, whose shrine was much resorted to at the time, not only by the Hindus, but

* Priest.



frequently also by the Mahomedans living within several miles around Boná Ghát. At one time the idol had large funds allotted for its maintenance, the law under the Hindu Rájáhs having conferred on the *Sabáit* the power of levying a tax of one *trisulá* pyce on each bullock that entered Pergunnáh Dátteáh, and one *pootáh* of grass out of each bundle exported therefrom. But these exactions having been subsequently abolished by the British Government, a small money compensation in lieu of them had to be paid to the shrine by the Zemindár. It is said that the amount of this stipend having on one occasion been further reduced by Monohur's grandfather, Guddádhur, the god assumed the appearance of a *daitya* of ferocious form and took his seat at the top of the temple, which caused a total cessation of rain in the



village in the sultriest part of the year, the tanks becoming simultaneously filled with blood, or water of that colour. The whole village, with the Zemindár at their head, turned out thereupon to pacify the deity ; his allowance was fully restored, and the arrears of it paid down before him ; and, his old temple having become ruinous, a new temple was raised to him on the banks of the Bhetná, upon which he was mollified. This new temple is the one that still stands, and has always been kept in good repair ; and the deity has been so feared ever since that no business of any importance is undertaken in this part of the country to the present day without previously consulting him.

“ Why consult your mother on matters which it is not possible for her to understand ? ” said the *Fakir* to the Zemindár.

"We, as Mahomedans, have consulted our own most sacred shrines, and you as a Hindu are welcome to do likewise. Have you no faith in Nággesur Mahádeva, or do you apprehend his misdirecting you?"

"I have the fullest confidence in the god of my fathers," answered Monohur, devoutly, "and I accept your suggestion to refer the point of difference between us for his decision."

CHAPTER IV.

THE REFERENCE TO THE DEITY.

THE temple at Boná Ghát stands on the very brink of the Bhetná, on an elevated platform paved with Chunár stones. It possesses no striking features of grandeur or beauty, but is not an uninteresting building of its kind either, namely, of the four-cornered and vaulted temple kind, surmounted by a spire at the top, edifices of which description are to be seen almost everywhere throughout India. The approach to the platform from three sides is by three distinct roads, while from the fourth the ascent from the river is by a staircase of granite which goes far below the water's edge. The river flows by in a dark

and muddy channel, and is overlooked by a clump of tall palm trees growing almost immediately on its banks.

The morning was bright. The sun had arisen about an hour, and the gardens on three sides of the platform, refreshed by the dews of the night, were breathing out a luxuriant fragrance. But the hearts assembled before the shrine scarcely appreciated the charm of the scenery around them. They had come there with excited hopes and ambitions, excited griefs and fears, and their eyes scarcely ever strayed from the stone image of the god within the temple, which was fixed and inert, and the form of the *Sabiát*, a thin, middle-aged man, who seemed deeply absorbed in prayer.

The devotions of the priest being at last concluded, he came forward to the temple

gate to go through the accustomed routine of listening to and answering the inquiries of the crowd collected before him, and the first who accosted him was a woman who had been forced to come there by her neighbours. An orphan child of the village had fallen down from a *Cháltú* tree into a pool of water infested by alligators, and had not afterwards been seen. The woman had brought the news into the village. Her version was that she had seen the boy climb up the tree, had prevented him from doing so, but was not attended to; had witnessed his fall into the deepest part of the pool, and also his being seized upon and carried down by an alligator.

“That cannot be a true tale, surely,” said one of the villagers to her; “for there seems to be no reason for the boy to have got upon

the tree at all. Children never climb *Cháltá* trees of their own will, since the fruit cannot be eaten raw. Did you not tell the boy to get up and fetch some *Cháltás* for you?"

"No; why should I have sent up a poor orphan on such an errand? Don't I know that the pool has a bad name, and the tree also?"

"Will you swear before *Nággesur Mahádeva* that the story, as you have told it, is wholly true?"

"Yes," said the woman, boldly; and she was marched up at once to the temple to take the oath.

The *Sabáit* heard the reference with a smile, then, taking down a garland of flowers from the top of the *Lingam*, he placed it into the woman's hand.

“Mind, you are now speaking to the god himself, with his sacred garland in your hand. Tell him the story as you wish it to be believed.”

The woman attempted to speak, but could not. She coughed two or three times, and spat out blood with her spittle.

“There, behold,” said the *Sabáit*, “a convicted liar!” and that very moment the boy that was believed to have been carried off by an alligator ran out of the temple to the wonder of the villagers and their relief, for he was well loved by them.

“Well, what is your version of the story, boy?”

“Why, that woman there sent me up the *Cháltá* tree to get *Cháltás* for her. I fell from the tree into the pool beneath, and struggled hard to gain the shore. I do not

know how I succeeded ; the woman did not help me, for I saw that she had run off."

The next applicant before the shrine was a young woman of fifteen or sixteen, who was believed to be possessed of the devil, and had been brought there by her friends that she might be cured by the deity.

"Describe her ailment as it broke out," said the *Sabáit* to her friends.

"O, sir ! she complained first of pains all over her body, and afterwards spoke and behaved strangely, gnashed her teeth, and twirled and twisted her limbs in an indescribable manner. Two *Kobirájes* were called in, but could not say what was the matter with her. A *Rojá* saw her after them, and declared that she was possessed of the devil. He beat her violently with shoes on the head, breast, and back to exorcise the evil-

spirit. We remonstrated, but he said that there was no other treatment. His usage, however, did her no good, and, as we would not permit its repetition, we have brought her hither, feeling certain that Nággesor Mahádeva is quite able to effect the expulsion of the devil from her, if it pleases him to do so."

"You are right in thinking so," said the *Sabáit*. "Nággesor Mahádeva can of course do what no *Rojá* will ever accomplish. Take charge of this *billipatra** from his feet. Immerse it in a jar of water and give the patient a mouthful of the water to drink every morning and evening. If you do this regularly for a week the evil-spirit will be only too glad to get out of her."

* Leaf of the wood-apple tree, held sacred in the worship of Mahádeva.

The third case was that of a woman who had lost her child and could not find him. The child had a few silver trinkets on his person worth about two or three rupees. The mother had sought for him all over the village and beyond it, but without success. She was exhausted and crying bitterly on the road-side, when her neighbours suggested that she should go to the temple to inquire.

“Don’t you know,” said they, “that Nággésur Mahádeva can direct you aright in the search if it pleases him?”

“But how can I go to him? I have spent all I had in the search already, and have not a pyce now to buy offerings with to place before his shrine.”

“It does not matter. If you are really so poor as that he will undoubtedly answer your

heart's wishes without expecting any offering from you."

"And here I am, sir, with my rent heart before the god."

"You have done right, daughter, to come here in your distress. Your child has been kidnapped by the *Bájikars*, or gipsies, who passed this way two days ago. It is a small party of some sixteen or seventeen persons; all of them thieves and kidnappers. They have crossed the Hindangá Gáng already, and are now selling animal oils at Pulláshpole. Ask your friends to be alert. If you can overtake the party before they reach Chándpore you will recover your child, but not the trinkets he wore."

After having given these and other similar answers with celerity, the *Sabáit* advanced

towards a young man who was standing apart from the rest, though he had come to consult the deity even as they had done.

“You wish to take counsel of the deity, young man, but still hesitate to prefer your request. You need not be afraid. You are known to me, and the god of your fathers will always be a help to you in your difficulties.”

“I have, indeed, something very serious to consult him about, father, but I find it difficult to break the matter even to you.”

“Ah, I understand. The subject is very weighty, surely, and one may well hesitate to confide it to others. But I know all about the matter already, and, besides that, what you have to tell me concerns not you alone, but the public weal also, of which we are the best protectors. Don’t fear then to speak of

it as becomes a man of your position in life, for what you say you say to Nággesur Mahádeva, not to me. Describe your difficulty and you shall know the mind of the god about it at once."

"What I want to know of Nággesur Mahádeva is this only—Should I remain at home to get wived, as my mother wishes, or go out to fight the battles of my country, if my services are asked for?"

"If your country requires your services, young man, your first duty is to her and to your fellowmen. You will have plenty of time hereafter to cultivate the domestic virtues?"

"Think again, sir, and give me the exact dictum of the deity in its integrity. I am an only son, and have a widowed mother at home. I am, moreover, the sole heir of a

long line of eminent ancestors. The duties I owe to my mother and my family-name must be as important as any other."

"They are so, and it pleases the deity much to find that you are not forgetful of them. But they are not urgent, and there is no particular reason to fear that they would suffer by a short delay."

"How so, sir? I am eighteen years old already, and the practice in my family has always been for boys to get married before their sixteenth year, and for girls before their tenth."

"You have already departed from the rule then, young man, and may well give an additional year or two to your country before you get bound by your domestic duties and sit down to beget and rear children."

"But, my mother? Would it not be

unnatural to thwart her wishes when she has set her heart on marrying me without delay ? ”

“ Do you know whom your mother wants you to marry ? She wants the Zemindár of Boná Ghát to wed the heiress of Paithulli. The match is an unequal one for you in every respect, and very undesirable. Nággésur Mahádeva is the best friend of your house, and wishes you to seek and secure a better wife.”

“ Would it be right and becoming in me, sir, to set aside my mother’s choice ? ”

“ Right, to be sure,” answered the *Sabáit*, deliberately. “ A good wife is a great gain, young man, and it is most proper that the Zemindár of Boná Ghát should be well-married. But you must dare and deserve before you can get such a wife ; and the

deity may not help you to find one if you do not deserve and dare. Sit down and listen to a story of old days, and you may gather wisdom from it to invigorate your heart and hands."


It will be convenient to tell the story in a separate chapter.

CHAPTER V.

THE SABÁIT'S STORY.

“A HOLY Bráhmañ had one son and three daughters, all of whom were handsome and well-accomplished. When the father died he told his son not to give away his sisters to ordinary men, nor for himself to take an ordinary wife. The orphans lived quietly together for a year, and the girls, being very lovely, had many suitors. These, however, were ordinary persons, and were therefore summarily rejected.

“After the expiration of the first year there was a tremendous thunderstorm, accompanied by heavy rain, and, while the



lightnings flashed across the sky, a bright, beaming youth entered the Bráhmaṇ's house.

“‘Who art thou?’ asked the young Bráhmaṇ of the intruder, in surprise.

“‘O, I am the Spirit of the Storm,’ said he, ‘and have come to take away your eldest sister with me as my wife.’

“‘Take her off then, and God bless you both,’ returned the Bráhmaṇ youth; and the Spirit of the Storm married the young girl, and took her away with him into the air.

“Next year there was a violent earthquake, and the earth was split and broken asunder in several places, and a brave, fair youth entered the Bráhmaṇ's house.

“‘Who art thou?’ demanded the master of it again as before of the being who now confronted him.

“ ‘O, I am the Spirit of the Earthquake, and have come to woo your second sister to be my wife.’

“ ‘Take her away then, and God bless you both,’ said the young Bráhmaṇ, and the Spirit of the Earthquake married her, and took her down underneath the earth.

“ In the third year there was a tremendous inundation, and crocodiles and alligators from the sea covered the land, while a brave, bright youth entered the Bráhmaṇ’s water-covered house.

“ ‘Who art thou?’ demanded the young Bráhmaṇ of him, as on previous occasions.

“ ‘O, I am the Spirit of the Waters, and would fain have your third sister for my wife.’

“ ‘Take her then, and God bless you both;’ and the Spirit of the Waters married

her, and carried her off to the regions under the waters.

“ ‘ Well, I have married away all my sisters fairly, even according to my father’s injunction,’ said the Bráhmaṇ youth to himself. ‘ Where am I to find an extraordinary wife now to keep house for me ? ’

“ He was overheard from a neighbouring tree by a beautiful bird with many coloured wings, which chirped out in reply that it had seen a most extraordinary girl in the depth of the forest. ‘ She is the daughter of a *Dánava*, and is very much beloved by her father, and very carefully guarded. She is lovelier than all your sisters, and the words drop from her mouth like pearls of wisdom.’

“ ‘ How, O bird, is she to be wooed and won ? ’

“ ‘O, her father goes out every night seeking whom to devour, and if you can see her then and induce her to elope with you she may be yours.’

“ Brave was the Bráhma youth, and very fond of excitement and adventure, and he entered the forest in the night alone, and traced the *Dánava*'s daughter to her home.

“ ‘Will you come away, bright eyes, with me? Your life here must be very lonely, and we could be so happy with each other elsewhere.’

“ ‘Willingly,’ said the girl, ‘for I have got weary of my seclusion, and uneasy also, as not knowing for what purpose I am here so rigidly detained. But I fear it will be very difficult for us to escape hence; the risk, I assure you, is very great.’

“ ‘Well, I must take it notwithstanding,’



said the youth in reply ; ‘ such a prize is well worth a lot of troubles and fears.’

“ They tried hard to get out of the forest before the *Dánava’s* return, but were unable to do so, being overtaken almost at its borders.

“ ‘ Ha, girl ! hast thou got a lover and wouldst escape from me ? Get home, hussy, and I shall soon come to you after I have punished your seducer suitably ;’ and he bound the Bráhman youth and suspended him from the highest tree in the forest that the owls and other night-birds might come and peck at him. But the Spirit of the Storm, seeing the distress of his brother-in-law, came promptly to his aid, and, raising a furious gale, levelled the tree with the ground, wafting the youth at the same time safe to his home.

“ ‘I must try again to secure that precious wife,’ said the youth to himself after passing a wretched and sleepless night. ‘Never was such a beautiful dream seen in life before, and I must not give up the prize without further attempts;’ and he entered the forest again with a bold heart at night, and appeared before the *Dánava*’s house.

“The girl uttered a cry of pleasure on seeing him safe and sound, and fastened her arms around his neck, and hung from it as a bridal garland.

“ ‘Ah, why hast thou come hither again, my lover? Hast thou not felt already how fearful my father is?’

“ ‘I would not be worthy of thee, sweet maid, if I did not dare thus much for you. Let us fly again, dearest, and it may be that this time we shall be able to escape him.’

“‘I am quite as willing to go as ever,’ replied the maiden, ‘but am not so hopeful of success as you are; and if we fail again you are sure to be more fearfully punished than before.’

“‘So be it,’ said the youth; and they fled once more, but were again unable to clear the forest prior to the *Dánava’s* return.

“‘Ha! hast thou ventured to repeat thy bold game so soon, young man, notwithstanding the punishment I inflicted on thee last night? This time then, I shall bury thee underground and deprive thee of daylight for ever.’

“But the Spirit of the Earthquake was alive to the danger of his brother-in-law, and splitting up the ground in his rage he liberated him and conveyed him safe to his home.

“ ‘ A third time must I try to get that girl as my wife. I have given away my heart to her already, and, if this suspense be not promptly ended, it will be all over with me in a short time ; ’ and he entered the forest again at night to carry out his intent.

“ The girl was delighted as before to receive him, though remonstrating that he should have come risking a fresh capture ; and they eloped once more, but to be apprehended again before the forest was quite cleared.

“ ‘ Now, by the soul of my fathers,’ swore the *Dánava*, addressing the young Bráhmaṇ, ‘ this time I shall surely fling thee into the sea that thou may’st never turn up again ; ’ and he threw him out of the forest with such force that he sped through the air like a falling star, and fell into the ocean at a distance of more than a hundred miles.

“ But the Spirit of the Waters had observed the peril of his brother-in-law, and, rescuing him from the waves, carried him safely to his house.

“ Sore, sore grieved was the Bráhmaṇ youth at these repeated failures in securing the wife of his choice.

“ ‘ O, friendly bird, you told me where the peerless bride was to be found ; can you not tell me how she is to be secured ? ’

“ ‘ Thou art a Bráhmaṇ’s son, O, youth, and dost thou ask advice on such a subject from a little miserable thing like me ? Take a jar of Gungá water with you and some *Toolsee* leaves, and, when you run away with your bride-elect, scatter the water and the leaves behind you, and no *Dánava* will dare to cross them to approach you.’

“ Armed as advised, the Bráhmaṇ youth

entered the forest for the fourth time, and mighty glad was the *Dánava's* daughter to see him alive and well, yet terribly afearred that he should have come after her once more.

“‘O, my dearest lover, why have you ventured hither again for me? This time my father will surely kill you.’

“‘So be it, my love; I would rather die at his hands than live without you. But come away quickly with me. This time our plan is well laid, and your father will not be able to overtake us.’

“They fled as before, and the Bráhmaṇ youth scattered Gungá water and *Toolsee* leaves on their wake, and the *Dánava*, though he could see them from a distance, was unable to approach them. He uttered a fearful cry, like the howl of a wild beast

deprived of its young; raved and tore his hair in rage; and his daughter was greatly terrified at the outburst of his wrath. But she was hurried through the forest by her lover with great celerity; and they lost no time in getting married as soon as they were out of it, and the *Dánava's* daughter became a good, dutiful, and pious Bráhmāni."

"This is a rather long tale, sir," said Monohur, somewhat pettishly; "and I could have heard just as good a one at home from my old grand-aunt, were I disposed to listen to her patiently. But I don't see what connection the story has with my case, or what lesson I am expected to learn from it."

"This only: you must venture as much, or more even, for your bride than the youth I have spoken of did for his; and, if your choice be of the right sort, you shall have the

Spirits of the Storm, Earthquake, and Waters to assist you, and, over and above them, the Spirit of Purity and Peace. They are all, I assure you, at work at this moment; and it is well for thee, my son, to take part in their labours, to which your mind has been already directed."

CHAPTER VI.

THE LECTURE AT HOME.

A FEW hours later in the day Monohur had to meet his mother, who had been anxiously awaiting his return. He would have avoided seeing her if he could have managed it, but it was simply impossible to do so. She had been watching closely for him, and sprang towards him with a scream as she saw him coming into the house.

“Where have you been all this time, Monohur? And why did you not return home at once after disposing of the school-quarrel case, as I had asked you?”

“O, mother, I had business out of the village to attend to; and I also went to

consult Nággesur Mahádeva on matters that deeply affect my interest and welfare.”

“What may those matters be, my son? And why was I not told of them before you went? Your interests are mine, Monohur; you are nothing apart from me, nor I from you.”

“I know that well, mother dear, for I know that you are the best and kindest mother that ever breathed. But I do not wish that you should be mixed up with the matters I was referring to. I am a big boy now, and may have especial secrets of my own, you know.”

“Do you really think so, Monohur? Are you already tired of my control?” asked the mother, looking up almost reproachfully at his face. “You are young, boy, and therefore apt to be led astray if not carefully watched

over. You can have no secrets from me at this age but such as are sure to lead you into difficulties."

But there was no disposition on the part of the son to trust his personal affairs to his mother's keeping.

"A woman can have no correct knowledge of men and public matters," thought he to himself. "She has hitherto been led entirely by the *Surburákár*, to whose tutoring I shall not submit."

His spoken reply, however, was both kinder and more respectful, though still very vague.

"O, mother, you shall know all in time. Just let me have a short while to understand my own heart aright; and I shall then be able to reproduce it before you with better effect."

“Which is as much as to say, Monohur, that you will not trust me with your secret at present. Ah, boy, I did not expect this want of confidence in me from you. I only hope you understand your position aright.”

“What do you mean, mother? I certainly do understand my position, I think; but I cannot say that I understand your words in the least.”

“Why, I was told by the *Surburákár* that in that school-squabble case you have discharged the delinquent who made use of the knife, instead of sending him up to the district magistrate, as the Government orders require. Is not that mistaking your position as a Zemindár greatly? Don't you know that you are bound to make over such offenders to the Government authorities?”

“How bound? My impression always was that the Zemindárs are the *de facto* Rájáhs or rulers within their respective estates, and that the power to discharge or punish offenders rests with them alone.”

“No, no; certainly not. That may have been the case in the past, but is not so now. We hold our lands from the Government, and are in every respect subordinate to it. There is Nilkant coming, who will explain all this to you more clearly. I only wish you would learn your duties and responsibilities properly before attempting to cut off your leading-strings.”

“The leading-strings, mother, I will not endure. I might have borne your control well enough, but I see that you can do nothing without Nilkant, and I will not put myself under his guidance if I can help it. I

am willing, however, to learn whatever you or he may have to communicate to me."

He then turned to the *Surburákár* who had come up, and said rather proudly—

"Well, Nilkant, I find that you have reported unfavourably of me to my mother with reference to that quarrel case in the *Muktab*. Will you explain to me why my proceedings in that matter have received your disapproval?"

"I have brought these papers with me, and if you will read them attentively you will find that in such matters Zemindárs have no such discretion as you were pleased to exercise. First read this paper, which is a copy of the original *Kuboolyat*, or engagement, which was executed by Kooláye Chánd Rái, your ancestor of revered memory, when the

Zemindáry was conferred on him by the British *Ráj*."

Monohur took the paper that was handed to him, and began to read it very carefully. It ran as follows :—

"I, Kooláye Chánd Rái, Zemindár of Boná Ghát, do execute this *Kuboolyat* on my part out of my free will and consent. Having been appointed to hold the office of Zemindár in Boná Ghát, I agree to collect the rents according to the rates sanctioned by the Government. I shall pay the annual revenue due to the Government in the instalments specified in the annexed schedule, without excuse or delay. I shall keep the ryots prosperous and contented, and exert myself to improve the lands, so that they may bring forth more crops than they yield at present. I shall not allow cultivated lands to fall

waste, nor inferior crops to be grown on superior lands. I shall not be prodigal in my own expenses, nor allow my ryots to be so. I shall never grant *gygheres*, or lands in free gift, without obtaining the permission of the Government. I shall at all times keep a careful watch over the boundaries of my Zemindáry. I shall not allow guns, or swords, or other offensive weapons to be manufactured, sold, or used on my estate without the sanction of the Government. I shall prevent, to the best of my power, the commission of murders, robberies, disturbances, thefts, and other offences within my Zemindáry; and, when they are committed, I shall make over all offenders to the Government authorities for trial and punishment, with such stolen property as may be recovered, etc., etc."

Monohur read the document twice over before he returned it to the *Surburákár*.

“If I had been Kooláye Chánd Rái,” said he, “I would certainly not have submitted to such terms as are here stated.”

“Then you would not have received the *Sunnud* which was granted to your honoured ancestor in return for his *Kuboolyat*,” answered Nilkant, in a quiet, impassive tone, handing another paper to him for perusal.

The wording of the *Sunnud* was as follows :—

“Be it known to all Kánoongoes, Pradháns, Mátabars, and Ryots of Boná Ghát, in Pergunnáh Dátteáh, in the district of 24 Pergunnáhs, that, whereas Rái Kooláye Chánd Sándyal is in possession of the Zemindáry aforesaid, and has signed an engagement to discharge his duties honestly and faithfully to the Government, the said Zemindáry is

hereby granted and assigned to him, subject to the terms of the *Kuboolyat* executed by him. You are all accordingly ordered to honour him as your lawful Zemindár, and never to wander from his lawful commands. You are never to conceal any matters from his knowledge, and are to pay rent to him punctually, according to the laws promulgated by the Government and the rules and customs which have hitherto obtained. The Zemindár, on his part, is required to keep his ryots contented, protect them with a watchful eye, prevent the commission of crimes within his estate, and deliver over all offenders to the Government authorities for trial and punishment."

"Were such the terms under which the predecessors of Kooláye Chánd Kortá held their office under the Mahomedans?"

"No ; the Mahomedans left more power in

the hands of their manager-substitutes than the British Government has done ; but they also exercised greater atrocities over them, if all that is said of them be true."

"I don't believe all that is said against them," cried Monohur, in a fretful tone. "It is the English only who traduce them, and their reason for doing so is obvious. I say again that had I been Kooláye Chánd Rái I would not have accepted the Zemindáry under such documents as these ; nor do I understand how the terms enunciated in them are binding on me."

"How foolishly you speak, indeed," observed his mother, expostulatively. "The English Government is a paternal one, and all that we have we owe to it. The terms of the engagements referred to are binding on us by those of the Perpetual Settlement. Don't you know what that is ?"

“But the land, mother, the land is the free gift of the gods. The English did not bring it out with them in their ships; did they? The country belongs to its inhabitants, who were placed in it by the gods. The English understand this well enough in their own country. Why have the Hindu and Mahomedan laws then been interfered with and overturned? Why have not all the privileges we enjoyed before under the Mahomedans been continued to us? O, mother! if all Zemindárs were of my mind they would throw up their Zemindáries rather than hold them under such conditions as have been shown to me.”

The young man uttered these words with sparkling eyes and in an animated and resolute voice, which brought to his mother's face an expression of deep distress and anxiety.

“I fear this comes of your having listened to the whisperings of a Mahomedan *Fakir* who has been frequently seen in your company,” gasped out the poor woman at last. “O, Monohur, do not speak in that vehement way, nor use such dangerous words again, if you would not break my heart! The Mahomedans are arrant knaves themselves, and would fain make knaves of the Hindus also, if they can. The English have conquered the country; what good then can come of your reviling them? Every word that you say may be true in the abstract; but still ought such words to be uttered? We are happy as we are, O, my son! Don’t aspire to be wiser and greater, or you will only bring down ruin on yourself and yours, for the Government, though paternal, is eagle-eyed and iron-armed.”

"She is right," said Nilkant. "If you continue to think as you have expressed yourself you will only be putting the rope round your own neck."

Monohur let the subject drop. The issues raised in his mind by the documents shown to him were too weighty and important for a passionate discussion.

"I have already liberated the school-boys, mother, and there is nothing more to be done in that matter now. If the authorities take offence at what I have done I must submit to such punishment as they may choose to inflict on me. I have no objection to your and Nilkant's disposing of all such cases for me in future."

The mother would have remonstrated further with him, but could not, and Monohur took advantage of her silence to

rush out of the house to the wood that skirted it on the north and east, to commune with himself in silence and alone.

The house was bounded on both those sides by bamboo clumps, which gird nearly all Bengali houses in the Mofussil almost in every direction. The English reader asks —“ Wherefore ? ” The question has never been answered correctly, though the answer is a very simple one. The country for centuries was a very unquiet one, as there were nothing but raids and invasions in every part of it throughout the Mahomedan era ; and these bamboo clumps often saved the inhabitants from great and various calamities in those days. All persons who had houses worth saving belted them round with dense bamboo thickets to render them unapproachable except by one or two narrow

winding passages, or, as in the case of the Zemindár's house, from one side only ; and within these thickets whole communities found refuge when, elsewhere, the land was being plundered and harried. O, Monohur, if you had read them aright those bamboo clusters alone ought to have taught you a lesson sufficient to balance your mind ! But an entire set of new ideas had been foisted into his mind, and was playing the deuce with his brain.

“The whole country is now ripe for a revolt,” muttered the Zemindár to himself. “Why should I not take advantage of the circumstance to better my position if I can ?”

CHAPTER VII.

THE FERÁZEE RISING.

WHILE the events recorded in the preceding chapters were occurring in one portion of the district, a Mahomedan conspiracy was being matured in another—namely, in the Pergunnáhs of Anoorpoor, Bálindáh, and Balleáh, all of which were almost adjacent to Dátteáh. The village of Chánpore, in Bálindáh was the original home of a cow-herd youth, named Teetoo Meer, who was generally known as a good-for-nothing fellow, much complained of by the farmers for the manner in which he treated their cows. This man acquired afterwards a reputation for sanctity by the performance of

a pilgrimage to Meccá, where he is said to have met with a distinguished Wáhábee leader, named Syed Ahámud, who exhorted him to undertake the reformation of the Mahomedan religion in his part of India. In furtherance of this project Teetoo, on returning from his pilgrimage, repaired to the fair at Hurwá, which is celebrated in commemoration of Gorá Chánd, a Mahomedan *Pir*, and took the opportunity to promulgate the Ferázee doctrines, or a slight modification of Wáhábism, requiring at the same time that all good Mahomedans should wear a long beard. His language was far from being conciliatory; no attempt at persuasion or instruction was ever made by him; he preferred, even from the outset, to see what could be done by abuses and threats. But there was no want of success on that account.

He managed in a short time to secure a large following, and, being joined by another *budmásh* named Miskeen Sháh, began to arm his followers with clubs and other weapons, which soon converted them into a dangerous gang.

“How are we to put down this new movement?” asked Rámdhone Ghuttack, the Zemindár of Sáduckpore, of some of his brother Zemindárs. “The innovations introduced by Teetoo are unsettling our estates, and may eventually lead to mischief and confusion.”

“What if we levy a tax on beards?” suggestingly answered Kristo Prosád Rái, the Zemindár of Poorá. “If the distinguishing mark of the sect be removed would not that act as a deterrent and prevent more of our ryots from joining it?”

“It may or may not,” responded a third Zemindár; “but the idea is a capital one, and should be carried out at once.”

An order was accordingly issued simultaneously by all the Hindu Zemindárs of Anoorpoor, Báлиндáह, Bálleah, and Surfarázpore authorising the levy of a tax of one rupee and four annas annually on each beard, whether cultivated by a Mahomedan or a Hindu. The Mahomedans protested against this as an unjust exaction, and, on their objection not being heeded, they complained of it to Teetoo.

“Ah!” exclaimed Teetoo, “don’t I understand what the Kaffirs mean? It was I that directed the cultivation of the beard, and surely their order is levelled against me personally, more than against others. Have the fools then forgotten their old cowherd

boy so soon, and shall I not hasten to remind them that I live ? ”

The threat was significant, and the opportunity to give effect to it was not difficult to find. The Hindu festival of Rám Nobomi had fallen on the same day with the Akhiree Cháhár Sambá of the Mahomedans, and, while Kristo Prosád was celebrating the former at Poorá with great *éclat*, Teetoo collected a large party of his followers at Ekdil Sháh's Durgáh, which stood in the immediate neighbourhood of the Zemindár's house.

“Is it right,” said Teetoo to his men, “that the Hindus should be deafening us with their cries while we are here at prayer ? Should we not attack their deity and pound it into dust ? ”

“Dare we ? ” asked Miskeen Sháh. “The

Dárogáh is personally present at the Zemindár's house."

"Then we shall smash the Dárogáh's head along with that of the Zemindár if either ventures to interfere with us. Could we not do that much in defence of our faith?"

And Teetoo's valour was much applauded by his adherents.

The Zemindár's house was immediately after attacked by an infuriated mob armed with swords and bludgeons, and, as the Hindus resisted, there was a great fight to begin with. The Dárogáh attempted, but in vain, to put down the affray, and the Zemindár's men, being as tens against hundreds, were eventually beaten, and obliged to fly. Flushed with their success the Mahomedans now slaughtered a cow in the house to desecrate it, and defiled the chapel, especially

by sprinkling the blood of the animal on its floor and walls.

“I have heard,” said Miskeen Sháh, “that the women of the Zemindár’s house are very pretty. Must we not see them?”

“No, no,” said the Dárogáh, “that would fix an indelible disgrace on the family. You have done mischief enough already, and should retire.”

But Teetoo would listen to no remonstrance, and, the Zemindár’s inner house being broken into, the females were pulled about and insulted, much household property being at the same time destroyed and looted. After that the assailants went off, but not till they had set fire to some piles of hay which sent forth dense clouds of smoke and flame, the final result of the act being that a good part of the village was consumed; and, in

the confusion that occurred, a sweet girl of ten or eleven, the only child of a respectable household, was lost or carried off.

“What will you do with the girl, Miskeen Sháh?” asked Teetoo. “Would you make her your wife?”

“My wife! No. I have a good many of them already, and don’t wish to be more heavily encumbered. But I shall certainly make a Mahomedan of her, and then marry her to Gházee Myán.”

The idea was so good that it was warmly applauded by the bulk of the Sháh’s hearers, for it was a religious sacrifice to which he had referred. The Mahomedans of the lower classes, who have lost their previous children, make a vow that if they have a child that will survive, he or she, or a substitute for him or her, would be devoted to the service of

Gházee Myán, or the Bamboo. When the child is a boy they make him a *Fakir*; when a girl she is married to the Bamboo, and then assigned to the village *Fakir*, but cannot be married by anyone.

“Our *Fakir* is much too old, I think.” said Teetoo, “to appreciate such a precious sacrifice.”

“O, never mind that. The *Fakir* has his rights and is working for the cause zealously, and the first capture of our sword and spear may well go to him.”

“Pooh! Nonsense!” exclaimed the Dárogáh. “Who ever heard of such a nice little girl as that being so sacrificed! I beseech you again, friends, to liberate her.”

“You have not chosen your friends wisely, Dárogáh Sáheb,” said Teetoo in reply, in a grim, sarcastic vein. “Don’t you see the

light there? What is to prevent us from roasting you over that fire?"

The Dárogáh was an old man, but bearing on his features the traces of an energy that age had not altogether obliterated. The threat of Teetoo did not seem to affect him much; but he looked anxiously about him lest any act of his should complicate matters yet further, and, preferring to bide his time, he left the place.

Then followed a series of other outrages perpetrated indiscriminately on all who had chanced to give offence either to Teetoo or to any of his followers.

"We have plenty of work to perform," said Teetoo; "let us lose no time in getting through it;" and they lost no time in harrying, burning, and slaying, such being the work they had selected for themselves.

The first attack after the Poorá outrage was on a native Christian named Smith, who was severely beaten and tortured.

“We have one remedy only for all distempers,” said Miskeen Sháh, “and must not hesitate to apply it alike on Christians, Mahomedans—and Hindus;” and it was applied with remorseless cruelty in every instance.

The next following attacks were mostly on Mahomedans, namely, on those who had come within the range of Teetoo’s hatred by abandoning their beards, and even the mosques they usually prayed in were burnt to the ground.

“What are these fellows but Káfirs?” said Gholám Másoom, whom Teetoo had appointed Commander-in-Chief of his army. “If they fear the orders of their Zemindárs

more than the orders we issue to them, whom have they to blame but themselves for the consequences?"

The greatest sufferers everywhere were, however, the Hindus, on whom no atrocities were left unused. Not only was the celebration of their religion rigorously prohibited, but oxen and fowls were killed in large numbers in their villages, and the temples desecrated by their blood. The raw hides of the oxen were at the same time scoffingly hung up in the houses of the inhabitants, and the female members of their families were invariably maltreated when unable to fly. And the area of the outrages was gradually widened so as to embrace not only several divisions of 24 Pergunnáhs, but also of Nuddeá and Furreedpore.

As a rule the Hindus succumbed under

the violence inflicted on them ; but at some places a show of opposition was occasionally made, notably at Raícottee, by a Zemindár named Hurdeb Rái, who was eventually defeated. All resistance of this kind was, in fact, invariably beaten down in the end ; and Teetoo was easily persuaded to believe that his power had become invincible.

“Should we not now turn our arms against the English Government,” said he, “and drive out the Feránees from the country ? That would best enable us to further the re-establishment of the Prophet’s faith in it on a basis of purity, and what have we to fear in the undertaking ? ”

And, taking a house at Nárkelberíáh, a village in Balleáh, he built a mud fort there, which became his headquarters, while the emblem of royal dignity, the imperial music,

was also assumed by him by the *Nákará* being beat morning and evening from the gateway of his palace, which soon assumed a fearful significance in peaceful ears, as it always preceded the raids made every now and then from the fort on the villages by which it was surrounded.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MYSTERIOUS BURGLARY.

ON the same night that Hurdeb Rái was attacked by Teetoo Meer, at Ráicottee, there was a burglary in the Zemindár's house at Boná Ghát, which caused much confusion and excitement in the village next morning, and kept it in ferment for some days.

"Who could have believed this possible?" exclaimed the *Surburákár*. "A burglary in the Zemindár's house! Where could the burglars have come from?"

"That is just what I want to know, Nilkant," said the Zemindár's mother, "for they have taken away everything valuable we had in the house, almost all the family

jewellery and all the hard cash saved during the last ten years."

She wiped her eyes with the end of her garment as she concluded, for the last ten years referred to meant the interval that had elapsed since her husband's death, which was sharply recalled to her memory. But she got over her weakness quickly, and continued—

"Where is Monohur now? The boy has attention for everything but what concerns him most. I wish he would return from his morning exercise soon, and inquire into this matter personally. Did he go out on horse-back to-day, do you know?"

"I really don't know, lady," said Nilkant. "I don't think I have seen him at all this morning. I must have been otherwise engaged when he went out."

“I do wish you or somebody else had seen him when he went; I want very particularly to know where he has gone to, and what is delaying him there.”

But no one could give her the information she sought, and she left the room in vexation, muttering dissatisfaction at everything, and with everybody; and there was good cause indeed for her discontent. The burglary committed was a most daring one. The private *Kházánághur* of the Zemindár, in which all the family jewels and the *Kházáná* were kept, had been opened and entered, but how it was not understood, as neither the door nor its lock showed any marks of violence. Inside the room was a large chest, the key of which was kept by Nilkant. This had been broken open, and the smaller boxes which were in it, and contained jewellery and

gold, had all disappeared. The keys of these boxes were, some of them, in the possession of Monohur, and others in the possession of his mother; and it was only natural that the latter should be getting very impatient that no clue to the robbery could be discovered. Nilkant also was in much distress, for he had always been a faithful servant of the family; and the loss to the Zemindár, if the property carried off were not recovered, would, he knew, be very great.

“It is useless waiting for the Zemindár’s return,” said he to himself. “He is a wild boy, and there is no knowing when he may come back; and, after all, it is not likely that he will be able to help the inquiry much. I must assume, therefore, the Zemindár’s functions myself for the time, even

though his mother, in her discontent, has not asked me to do so."

Nilkant was an efficient servant, and could be backed against any detective in an inquiry like the one now forced on him. He set on foot a diligent search, sending out people in all directions with very precise instructions for their guidance ; but no trace of the thieves could yet be found. They only discovered the boxes in a field at a mile's distance from the house, all broken open and their contents gone, with the exception of some documents, bills of exchange, and half-notes, which the burglars had thrown away as useless.

This was very disheartening news for the Zemindár's mother, and, getting more and more displeased every hour, she did not hesitate to utter unflattering words of all her servants.

"It is twelve o'clock now," said she, "and Monohur has not yet come back. Have you sent anyone to look out for him?"

"No; it would be useless to do so, for we don't know whither he has gone. He is so fond of taking long rides now and of staying away whole days from home that it would not be easy to trace out his retreat."

"Do try, though, Nilkant. I am very anxious that he should know at once what has happened here, even though he should prove to be of no greater assistance to me in this matter than you are. Was anyone with him last evening, do you know?"

The question threw a flood of new light into the *Surburákár's* mind. The *Fakir* had been with the Zemindár till a late hour of the night. With what object? Had he any hand in the burglary? Worse still, was it

possible that he had so far duped Monohur as to make him a thief of his own goods ?

The *Surburákár* looked sadly perplexed, and could only stammer out an imperfect reply.

“Yes, I believe I saw the Mahomedan *Fakir* with him till a late hour in the night.”

“What for ?”

“I—I really don’t know ; I am perfectly puzzled what to think of, or what to say.”

“Why, speak out your mind boldly, Nilkant. Tell me each thought as it comes up, I beseech you. Do you think the *Fakir* may have had a hand in the robbery ?”

“I would not be surprised at all, lady, if it should turn out to be so ; and I am afraid”—

Nilkant could not get on.

“Of what more? Speak out truly and bluntly, as has always been your wont. I like a direct man and a direct way of speaking, Nilkant.”

“Why, what can you expect but treachery from these Mahomedan knaves, though I am not altogether sure that the *Fakir* is a Mahomedan? And the Zemindár being so wilful and silly, what so likely but that he should have been trepanned?”

The Zemindár's mother started as if she were shot through, and then looked pale as death.

“Impossible!” said she. “I cannot believe that of Monohur, Nilkant;” but even while she said so she was already half convinced that the view which had occurred to the *Surburákár* was likely to be true.

“What are we to do now, then?” asked

she after a long pause, with a deep drawn breath, looking out reproachfully at the open sky, which was as bright and gay as ever, as if it had never had a bit of grief to disturb its cheerfulness. "What is your advice now?"

The *Surburákár* had not made up his mind yet for anything, and looked almost as disconsolate as his mistress; but the question recalled him to his duty, and he presently answered—

"We must look sharply out now both for Monohur and the *Fakir*, and await disclosures as they turn up."

"But were there none others with the Zemindár but the *Fakir*?"

"Yes, of course there were; I mean his servants were waiting in the anteroom as usual. I think I saw Kesto Mánná, Seeboo

Sing, Láll Chuprássi, Hurry Cowár, and Pear Gáyn in attendance."

"Don't you suspect any of them of having acted as an accomplice to the *Fakir*?"

"I don't know whom to suspect and whom not. But I have had the houses of all our servants overhauled, and nothing has been found in them. The men just named are besides all of them present here at this moment, with the exception of Pear Gáyn."

The lady returned to her inmost apartments in a state of mind that cannot be described, while the *Surburákár* passed on to his work, musing over his plans.

When an Indian is following a trail he is never discouraged by any difficulties in his way, but goes on continuously till he comes to the end of it. This was exactly what Nilkant was doing; but the case bore a very

ugly appearance yet, notwithstanding all his endeavours to unravel it, and he felt at times that he was perhaps not on the right scent after all. He had not only had the houses of the servants, but of several other persons in the village who were suspected by him, very carefully searched; but all to no purpose. Pear Gáyn's disappearance not having been accounted for, he had brought away his wife and children from his house, and had kept them under careful though kind surveillance. He had also had all the *Kurmokárs'*, or goldsmiths', shops overhauled, as these people in all villages are generally in league with thieves and burglars, and melt down stolen property for them almost before hue and cry about the loss can be raised.

"What more can I do?" said he to himself almost in despair. "I am afraid it is the

good-for-nothing boy himself that has voluntarily put his head into the noose."

At this moment some fresh clamouring was heard almost all over the house, and everything in it was once again in commotion as before.

"Why, what is the matter this time? What does this new tumult mean?" asked the *Surburákár* in a loud voice.

"O, sir, Pear Gáyn was captured by our people near Mádhubkáttee, but has been rescued."

"Rescued? By whom?"

"By a large body of Ferázees, headed by the *Fakir*, who was seen here so often with the Zemindár."

"Ah! Then my worst fears have been realised. Alas, poor mother! How shall I dare to tell you such tidings of your son?"

CHAPTER IX.

IN THE TRAP AT LAST.

ONE of the most important rivers passing through the district of 24 Pergunnáhs is the Schámutti, or Jabooná, which runs in a very tortuous course, but is deep throughout its entire length, and navigable for boats of the largest size. It is the largest and most important of all the streams lying between Boná Ghát and Nárkelberiáh, and here on the left bank of it some eight or ten persons were seen four days after the burglary at Boná Ghát, with a jaded palfrey at their side, awaiting for the return of the ferry-boat to cross over.

“ You are carrying me to new scenes and

new faces, *Fakir*. What bribe will you give me to forget the old faces I leave behind?" asked the youngest of the party of his friend and guide.

"O, you leave them for a short time only, my son, till you have made an undying name for yourself, and acquired an independent position in the world," was the *Fakir's* reply.

"That is, indeed, the hope and inducement that has brought me out," rejoined the young man; "and I only wish I could have come over with my mother's consent and blessing. So good a mother she is, and yet I have both deceived and disobeyed her."

"You must not think of that now, young man," remarked the *Fakir*. "The die is cast; you have thrown your lot with ours, and must go through the ordeal you have

accepted, till time rights both your condition and ours."

"True, indeed," said the young man. "But I am a stranger here, and this is the first time that I have come out among men who do not know me in the least. No one, in fact, of all the warriors I come to knows anything of me but yourself, and I cannot help feeling somewhat uncomfortable, as not knowing what reception I may meet with among the rest."

"Have I not assured you already of a warm and cordial welcome by all? Have you any good reason to doubt my truth?"

"None whatever, my friend. My only fear is that you may not have sufficient influence with your party to make me very acceptable to them. The Ferázees are said to be fanatics, and they have been fighting

from the commencement with all the Hindu Zemindárs in their neighbourhood.”

“ Yes, that was, indeed, the first phase of our development, but that phase has since gone by. The Ferázee doctrines were originally enunciated at Dowlutpore, in the Furreedpore district, whence I come. Their objects are twofold ; first, to purify Mahomedanism, and next to liberate the country from foreign thralldom. It was Teetoo and his party who commenced to fight with the Hindus, but he has now been overruled in council by us. The country belongs to the Hindus and the Mahomedans, and the two religionists could not act in opposition without weakening each other. We have a common object now to attain—namely the expulsion of the Feránees from Bengal, and are as assiduously seeking for the aid of the

Hindus at this moment as we had opposed them before."

"Have you got any other Hindus yet besides me and my servants to join you?"

"Yes, we count them by hundreds already, and in a short time expect to count them by thousands."

"And then I shall be only one of the thousands who will have come forward to help you!"

"One man must be *one* under all circumstances, my son, for it is morally impossible that he should be more. But Kharga Báhádoor shall be an unit as prominent as Miskeen Sháh, or Gholám Mássoom, or may be as Teetoo Meer himself, for you have the means of commanding your position."

Kharga Báhádoor was gratified at being so spoken of and assured, and jumped into the

boat with alacrity as it touched the beach. The river was quickly crossed, and a couple of hours later they approached Nárkelberiáh, which they found well stockaded and watched with zealous care.

“Who are the people whom the *Fakir* is bringing in?” asked Miskeen Sháh of Teetoo, looking at them with suspicious eyes. “They are most of them Kaffirs apparently. Have we not more of them already than is safe to keep about us?”

“O! this is that rich Zemindár who is in a hurry to become an independent prince. He has lots of money to throw away, and we want the sinews of war sadly,” said Teetoo.

“There, Gholám Másoom, there is another sub-commander for you to drill and educate. He is a Zemindár and must have a separate command; must he not?”

“No, not a separate command, surely,” said Teetoo; “but we must find him a post of honour, if only for the wealth he brings with him.”

“Is there no other price for his adherence to us?” asked Miskeen Sháh. “I can hardly believe that he has come out with his moneybags simply from an expectation of independence.”

“Simply for that, and for nothing else,” replied Teetoo, “though the *Fakir* has got another springe ready for him, I hear.”

“What may that be?”

“A wife! The child you captured at Poorá, who was to be married to the Bamboo, and made over to the *Fakir*, the *Fakir* wishes to be married to this youth.”

“That is hardly fair, chief. The child is my prize. I was willing enough to devote

her to the service of Gházee Myán, for the benefit of our cause ; but why should I give her up to a Kaffir ? ”

“ I don’t ask you to give her up at all. Only allow him to play with her, and remain entangled in our snare for the time. When we have got from him what we want it will not be difficult to throw him overboard.”

While this colloquy was passing on one side the *Fakir* was introducing his friends to Kharga Báhádoor on the other—that is, as well as he could do so from the distance that yet separated them.

“ Do you see who are coming forward to welcome you, my son ? That warrior there with a long face, brown complexion, and hollow eyes, who wears the coarse cloth of a *Hájee*, that is Teetoo Meer, the life and soul of our enterprise.”

“And the chief on his right, who towers above him by a whole head, and is talking less with Teetoo than with the people around him?”

“O, that is Gholám Másoom, the commander of our forces. He is always distinguishable alike by his superior stature and the enormous club he carries with him. Don’t you see him brandishing the club every now and then as he talks?”

“I do. The cudgel, I suppose, is understood as the insignia of his office?”

“Just so; and it does good service in keeping the mob in order, for they do not care much for any one who cannot impress them with fear.”

“And the man on Teetoo’s left? I mean him with pale cheeks, aquiline nose, and thin lips; who is he?”


“O, that is Miskeen Sháh, a man terrible in counsel, and scarcely less terrible in arms.”

“But he seems to have a singularly unpleasant expression in his face though. Has he not?”

“Hum! We need not remark that. They say that his private life is that of a demon. But he is a very useful ally to us at this juncture; and that is all we care for now.”

Further talk was stopped by the two parties coming up to and facing each other; and the welcome Teetoo gave to his new recruits was so frank, courteous, and cordial, that Kharga Báhádoor was immensely flattered and obliged.

“Meer Sáheb, you really overpower me by your kindness and courtesy,” said he to him thankfully. “Heaven be my witness that I have brought my whole heart to your cause.”



“It is the best of all causes, brother,” said Teetoo, “and I congratulate you on your having joined it. Let Hindu and Mahomedan exert side by side in it, and show who can do most for securing the freedom of his country.”

“I shall certainly do my best to justify your selection of me to share with you the honours of this enterprise,” returned Kharga Báhádoor; “but I fear I make an indifferent figure in the scene since I come to you almost alone.”

“O, that does not signify in the least,” said Miskeen Sháh. “We have men, but not the money wherewith to pay for their exertions, and since you bring money to make up for what you are wanting in, you contribute equally with us to the good cause to be sure.”

They were now drifting into complete confidence seemingly on both sides, and on the part of the recruits in perfect sincerity also ; and, absorbed by the bustle and animation around him, Kharga Báhádoor forgot for the moment the mother and home he had left behind. The forces under Teetoo were not less than four thousand strong, but consisting mainly of shepherds, woodcutters, and bargemen, with a sprinkling of smugglers and cut-throats to give strength and stamina to the combination. Gholám Másoom, who had seen service as a soldier, had tried hard to introduce something like martial order among them; but apparently not with much success; though in the eyes of Kharga Báhádoor they seemed to form as good an army as he had any conception of. The stir and tumult which pervaded them were

mistaken by him for enthusiasm; and he already felt certain that the cause of liberty and nationality would be easily won.

The attention of the new warrior was at this moment drawn away in another direction by the *Fakir*. Not to leave things half done the latter had brought forward some of the other Hindu chiefs to see him, and with them the little girl captured by the Mahomedans at Poorá. A creature more elf-like had never crossed the vision of Kharga Báhádoor, and he gazed at her with intense delight.

“Whose is that little child there, so slim and straight, and fresh in her tender grace; and what is her business here?”

The questions were addressed to the *Fakir*, but he had already left the place.

“O, that is my daughter,” said one of the Hindus present, “and my name is

Thákoor Bhunj ;” and he laughed much, and by winking significantly encouraged the young man to speak to and make friends with the child. But the child hid her face in her hands, partly from bashfulness and partly from fear, and would not respond to the advances of familiarity made to her, which made Kharga Báhádoor ask her in an undertone if he had in any way annoyed her.

“O, I am not offended,” said she ; “but I don’t know you, and cannot think of cultivating any close acquaintance with one I do not know.”

“Why not ? Your father wishes us to become good friends. Has he not said so ?”

“My father ? No, no ; that man is not my father. I have lost all hopes of meeting with my parents, and do not know what will become of me here.”

“Indeed! Do tell me your story then, and I shall try my best to serve you, and to be as a brother to you.”

“My story? What story? They have forced me away from my parents, and I only live with that man here because he is a Hindu and of my caste. I have lost all hopes of happiness in this life, and that is the beginning and end of my story.”


“Have you no friends at this place then?”

“None.”

“Will you allow me to be a friend to you, little one? I will give my heart’s blood to help you.”

“Will you take me back to my parents?” asked the child with an almost irradiant face.

“Yes, after our most important business here is over.”



“What is that; and how long will it take?”

“It is fighting the oppressors of our country. I think it will come on very soon, though I do not know when it may terminate.”

“In that case you cannot serve me, for I wish to go back to my parents now;” and she put up her little hands to her face again, and was at once in tears.

All the aspirations of Kharga Báhádoor were for war, but the turns of the human mind are so uncertain that he almost felt as if he could desert the cause he had embraced just to escape from that place with that grieved and gentle child.

But the *Fakir* was at his side again by this time.

“This is the wife I have selected for you,

my son, and a much better selection it is than that your mother would have made. You do not get her, however, till you have made a name worthy of her by liberating your country. The Spirits of the Storm, Earthquake, and Waters are at work now to secure that end, and you must work with them heartily to win the precious prize that has been reserved for you."

"O, father; am I not here for that work alone?"

CHAPTER X.

ASSERTION OF CIVIL AUTHORITY, AND ITS RESULTS.

THE acts of violence perpetrated by the Ferázees culminated towards the close of 1831, when, provided with money and arms by the wealthier recruits who had latterly joined them, they pillaged all the districts of Furreedpore, Nuddeá, and 24 Pergunnáhs, robbing all Hindus and Mahomedans without distinction who were found inimical to their pretensions.

“How mischievous the fellows are, surely!” exclaimed the Magistrate of Baraset, “and how foolishly too they are acting!

Their conduct is quite incomprehensible to me, for they are making enemies on all sides of them by their devilries."

"What do you think of doing, sir, under the circumstances?" inquired the Station Moonsiff.

"O, I must go amongst them to see if I cannot put down the disturbance by my presence at the spot."

"But your following is too small, sir," observed the Sheristádár. "You will make no impression on them with your policemen and sepoy's."

"Ah! but I don't want to fight them at all. I only wish to put a stop to further mischief if I can, and I am sure that if they see me out amongst them they will quietly come back to their allegiance."

The Moonsiff and the Sheristádár did not



regard the matter so hopefully, but they could not well contradict the Magistrate, who, as the head-officer of the district, had a right to consider himself to be the best-informed man in it; and he went out against the insurgents the very next morning with about a hundred policemen and twenty-five sepoys.

"The English are coming out to meet us," exclaimed the *Fakir*, speaking to Teetoo.

"How do you know?" asked the chief.

"My scouts have seen them," rejoined the *Fakir*. "They are only about four miles distant from this place now."

"Impossible!" said Teetoo, "for I would have known of it long before if they were so near, unless my watchmen are all dead or drunk."

"You will soon find, Meer Sáheb, that my

news is true," replied the *Fakir*; and it was fully verified within two hours after.

"They have come out indeed," said Gholám Másoom, "but only with some *chuprássies* and a handful of sepoys. We can ground them very fine with our clubs in half an hour if we care to do so."

And he marshalled forth the Ferázees in a body, all armed with clubs, swords, and spears, and ready for a fight.

"Ah! who are you coming to fight with?" exclaimed the Magistrate, as soon as he saw them advancing towards him. "Don't you see that I am the Magistrate of the district, and have repaired hither to restore order amongst you? Will you lay down your arms and return to your homes and occupations at once?"

"Wherefore should we?" asked Miskeen

Sháh in reply. "Who are the English that the children of Alláh and Mahádeva should call them lords and masters in their own native land? Who has made you a Magistrate over us? What right have you to dictate any terms whatever to us?"

"Ha, Miskeen Sháh! I know you for a double-dyed traitor," replied the Magistrate, "and you shall receive hereafter the punishment due to your many crimes. My immediate business is not with you, but with these misguided people whom you and their other chiefs, to serve their own personal interests, have led into danger. I call upon these to lay down their arms and return to loyalty and their homes, so that their folly may not be remembered against them."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the *Fakir*, thrusting himself forward as the spokesman of the

mob. "Have you, indeed, come hither to preach loyalty to us? But loyalty to whom? Does not loyalty to you and your race mean disloyalty to country, nationality, and faith? We have searched the records of our fathers, but have nowhere met with any rule or injunction that says that the Mahomedans and the Hindus are to be as slaves unto the Christians. We despise your suggestion, therefore, O, Magistrate, and will not listen to it."

"I am not come hither," said the Magistrate, "to discuss politics with you. I am here in the name of the law, to warn you that, if you do not break up your combination at once and return to your homes quietly, you will leave me no alternative but to proceed against you as traitors and disturbers of the public peace, and to punish you very severely for the crime."

"You crow much too loud, Magistrate Sáheb," said Teetoo derisively, "considering the small following at your back. Had you not better take time by the forelock and decamp? My people are looking with very unfriendly eyes at you as the representative of a power steeped in falsehood and guile, that entered our country begging to be allowed to traffic with us, but has ever since taken every opportunity to insult and oppress us. If you wish to save your life you have barely time to fly."

"The fellows mean mischief, sir," said the chief native-officer with the Magistrate. "We have very few fighting men with us, and Teetoo's suggestion is perhaps the best for us to adopt."

There were some Europeans, however, with the Magistrate—three or four only—who were unwilling to admit this, and,

being strong and well-made men, were naturally averse to fly.

“Suppose we wait till we get a mauling,” said one of these. “Would it be too late then to think of acting in accordance with Teetoo’s advice?”

“So far as I see,” said another, “there is no occasion for us to get funky yet. The fellows are blustering, but I don’t believe they will care to come to the scratch.”

But a shout was now raised by Gholám Másoom of which the meaning was not to be misunderstood; and his followers, answering in the same voice, rushed in a body against the Magistrate and his party, pelting brick-bats at them, which made the policemen to fly.

It is useless to attempt any description of what followed. The Englishmen showed

fight to begin with, retaining their posts with pertinacity ; but they were soon borne down by multitudes, and were eventually chased to the boats which had brought them ; and the net result of this assertion of civil authority was the loss of some lives, many persons being also wounded, while the enemy were elated with success.

“ Well, brother,” said Teetoo, speaking to Kharga Báhádoor, “ if the English annalists record this day’s fight truthfully, will they have much to boast of on behalf of their countrymen ? ”

“ O, I am told,” answered the Hindu Neoptolemus, “ that they have a very significant motto of their own, which says that ‘ silence is golden,’ and they will most probably keep quiet over the affair.”

“ I am particularly glad that the very first

engagement has been such a victory for us," said Gholám Másoom. "Our men have smelt blood now, and that of itself should greatly strengthen us."

"Let us announce our victory to all the villages around us then in fitting style," said Miskeen Sháh. "It will now be an easy task to devastate them into submission."

The whole country for miles around the Ferázee quarters was now accordingly laid waste by Teetoo and his followers, and for some days continuously no efforts could be made to check their violence. This compelled the peaceful inhabitants to desert their homes, and all the tract about Nárkel-beriah was in a short time reduced to an untenanted wilderness. That this would be the unavoidable result of their outrages was forcibly pointed out to them by the *Fakir*, but he could not get himself to be heard.

CHAPTER XI.

THE FIRE PUT OUT, AND THE RUN FOR A
SHAVE.

“WE must call in the military now to our assistance,” said the Magistrate, and he wrote down to Calcutta for troops ; and they made up a rather strong detachment there to put out the fire.

The party sent up consisted of one regiment of native infantry, a troop of horse-artillery, with a couple of field-guns, and some troopers of the Governor-General’s body-guard, all placed under the command of Major Scott ; and they pushed up by forced marches, and were before Nárkelberiah by the 19th November.

“We are saved !” shouted the people of the country, as they emerged from their hiding

places to cheer and encourage their deliverers. "See how gallantly they march! These surely are not the men whom Teetoo will care to confront?"

"I hope not," said the oldest inhabitant of the village, who was also the general referee. "There is something going to happen this time which Teetoo and his men have not dreamt of."

"But, O, father!" said the son of the old man, "the force under the English is still much too small in numbers as compared with that of the Ferázees, and how do you know that the something you hint at may not be as unfavourable to us again as was the first affair?"

"No, boy, no; you needn't frighten yourself with any such fears. The body-guard and the artillery are something very different

from a *posse* of *chowkeydárs*. Don't you see how well armed they are? Teetoo's men have no arms like theirs to fight with."

"O, yes, father, they have lots of sabres, lances, and knives. The village barber, who knows a great deal more of the matter than anybody else, says that he saw a cart-load of arms with them only a few days ago."

"They may have four cart-loads of them, my son, and be no better armed notwithstanding," returned the old man; "for they have neither guns nor gunpowder, and that makes all the difference in the world. My grandfather was a camp-follower at Plassey, and could well describe how the English fought there and in other places with their guns. It is up with Teetoo this time, I say; and you will find the prediction verified in a very short time."

There was no fright, however, in the Ferázee camp as yet, notwithstanding the exultation of the villagers and their predictions. Teetoo had received timely notice of the approach of the English, and had raised the courage of his men to a high pitch by stimulants ; and, well posted and commanded, they felt confident that, even if the odds had been against them as they were in their favour, they would still have been able to beat back their opponents in fair fight.

“ Now listen to me carefully,” said Teetoo to his adherents. “ Our position is excellent, and we will await the approach of our enemies where we are. The main body of our troops will be under the direct lead of Gholám Másoom, of course ; but it will be as well to have a strong reserve in charge of Miskeen Sháh.”

The arrangement proposed was so good that it was cordially approved by all; but Kharga Báhádoor looked disconcerted that no particular mention was made of him, and asked the chief bluntly whether he was to stand by with his arms folded, looking at the rest while they fought?

“O, brother, your duty will be to fight along side of me and the *Fakir*,” said Teetoo; “and our post will be in the van, ahead even of Gholám Másoom and the rest of them.”

The compliment was very flattering, and Kharga Báhádoor was extremely gratified.

“Thanks, Meer Sáheb, thanks,” was the only reply he made; and, becoming uncommonly excited, he drew out his scimitar dashingly, and marched up to the front.

The English troops advanced in their

usual heavy style, and Teetoo was called upon to surrender before the fighting began.

“We are as ten against one,” said the Ferázee chief laughingly in reply, “and who has ever heard of ten men submitting to one person, and why is such a foolish proposal made to me?”

“Ah, but notwithstanding your superiority in numbers, Teetoo, you know very well that the contest is not equal on your part. I ask again, therefore, whether you will yield or no?”

“I thought, Major Sáheb,” replied Teetoo, coldly, “that you had come hither to fight with us. Instead of boasting like a woman had you not better get ready to repel our attack?” And, the Ferázee war-cry being immediately raised, there was a tremendous discharge of brickbats, as on the previous occasion, wherewith the fight was begun.

The English troops fired in reply, but their opponents found that the fire was ineffective. Major Scott, still anxious to prevent bloodshed, had directed a firing of blank cartridges only, just to intimidate the enemy ; and, seeing that the volley was harmless, Teetoo raised the well-known cry of "*Gollá Khádállá*," or, " We have swallowed up their bullets." This made his men distractedly courageous, and the shower of brickbats was renewed with yet greater energy, till a few rounds of actual firing sent the balls hissing and whistling through the air, and wrapped the rice-fields in a bluish smoke which was with difficulty seen through, while nothing was heard underneath but fearful shouts and groans.

" O, Heaven, how terribly the Ferángees shoot !" exclaimed Teetoo's army of

cut-throats and coolies; and they ran pell-mell towards their fort with cries of fear.

The best fighters among the Ferázees were Teetoo, Miskeen Sháh, Gholám Másoom, Kharga Báhádoor, and the *Fakir*. Of these the first and third were shot down, while the other three were more or less severely wounded. Kharga Báhádoor had a regular hand to hand fight with a young English cadet, by whom he was wounded, upon which he raised his dagger with one hand while he seized his opponent by the throat with the other, and buried the flashing steel to the hilt in his chest.

“Down with them! Down with them! Slay! Slay!” was the shout raised by the *Fakir*; but there was no one to respond to it, all the men trying anxiously to get out of the battle-field and gain their fort or the *plantations* beyond it.

“It is trouble lost trying to rally our forces here,” said Kharga Báhádoor. “Let us fall back on the fort while we can, and see if we may not be able to hold it against the enemy.”

They did so accordingly, but down came the English there too, and it was astonishing in what short time the stronghold was attacked and stormed. It was a scrubby place at best, defended by the most trumpery fortifications, and swarming with disheartened refugees from the field; and the storming had only the character of a rush from without, answered by a shower of stones from within, the latter flagging in strength as the force of the former began to increase, after which there was a hand to hand struggle of the briefest duration, ending in a shout of triumph that drowned a cry of fear.

Over three hundred and fifty fighting

men were taken prisoners by the assailants, the rest of the garrison scampering off across the fields, and dispersing themselves among distant villages and farms.

“The English are very demons in avenging,” said the fugitives to each other as they fled, “and are sure to hunt us from covert to covert should we be unable to blind them. Let us fly to the barbers now and have our beards taken off.”

“Yes, the devils are upon us, and we must elude them as we may;” and they ran frantically for a shave, not excluding even those who had fought to the last.

“Ha ! Ferázee Sáheb, why this hurry to part with an appendage so respectable, and which has cost you the culture of so many months ?”

“O, friend, you are uncivil. I am not a

Ferázee, and never was. I kept a beard long before Teetoo Meer was heard of in this place: but, as the *goolmál* here is very great now, I am willing to part with it to prevent misconstruction."

"All right, friend; I am quite willing to believe what you say. But you know, of course, that we have raised our charge for shaving from one pyce to three rupees per head?"

"Monstrous! Surely you are joking."

"O, I was never more in earnest in my life. My next door neighbour there charges four rupees per head, as you may ascertain by asking him."

The *Fakir* paid down the three rupees without making the inquiry suggested, and had his beard removed, after which he pressed on Kharga Báhádoor to leave the place.

“Where is now my bright-eyed dream?” murmured the latter to himself. “Would I could find and save her.” But he knew not where to seek for her, or how to help her; and he looked up listlessly towards the *Fakir* and asked him whither he wished to go, and how?

“To Boná Ghát, if your house would shelter us for a time.”

“No, certainly not thither,” said Kharga Báhádoor sharply, as if stung by a serpent. “I had no business to leave it in the manner I did, and must not bring danger to it by my return.”

“That is very honourably resolved,” answered the *Fakir*, “and I am not very certain either that your house could shelter us. Whither would you wish to go yourself?”

“O, I am for rambling all over Bengal and the North West,” said Kharga Báhádoor, without a moment’s hesitation, “visiting the several *Tirthastháns*, or sacred places, in them; and I have already made up my mind to start within two or three hours.”

“Good,” replied the *Fakir*; “and I shall be ready to go with you by that time.”

“How so? I mean to visit all those places which are held sacred only by the Hindus.”

“And so do I,” said the *Fakir*. “Have I not taken off my beard?”

CHAPTER XII.

THE REVELATION.

It is a grand sight where the Ganges and the Brahmapootra unite with each other between the districts of Pubná and Mymensing, which the conjoint channel effectually separates. The stream is deep, majestic, and flowing; and the broad lawns and rich plantations it passes through glow with a beauty the like of which can scarcely be met with in any place out of Bengal. The first junction of the two rivers is at a point called Báрни, a few miles above the present station of Goálundo; and by day and night, throughout every month of the year, devotees arrive there in motley bands to bathe in the sacred

confluence. The shrine of Thákoor Lakshmi-Náráyana stands hard by, and adjoining it is a resting-place for pilgrims, where alms are liberally given to the maimed and the poor, the funds for the purpose being drawn from a large estate especially assigned for the maintenance of the idol by a pious lady of Pubná.

It was at this place that the two travellers from Nárkelberiah—namely, Kharga Báhá-door and the *Fakir*—arrived after an unpleasant and wearisome journey of more than two weeks.

“It is getting late already,” said the first to the second. “Had we not better put up here for the night?”

“Yes, my son, and until we get better quarters elsewhere. We shall not be noticed here among so many pilgrims, and need not make ourselves conspicuous in any way;”

and they groped on into the resting-yard, and stretched themselves out on the bare ground, in the same fashion as the other pilgrims, without mixing with any of them.

“Ought we not to change our names once more now at this place?” asked the first speaker again, the moment he saw that their movements were not much watched by the crowd around them. “I have a great mind to resume my old name to which I am naturally partial. *Kharga Báhádoor* is an appellation that sounds like a malediction under present circumstances, and I am anxious to get divested of it.”

“You think rightly, my son, for it is high time that we should drop our fighting names, and you will remember me henceforth as Bábájee Bissonáth, a *Kartá-Bhajá*, and not a *Fakir*.”

“Why, that will do very well indeed, and then you will pass for an out-and-out Hindu easily.”

“Ah ! I was really so at one time, and there is no reason why I should not be so again. You don't believe me, but I speak in earnest when I say that I am not only a Hindu, but a Hindu Bráhmaṇ, a man of your own caste by birth.”

“If you were a Bráhmaṇ before, how did you come to pass for a Mahomedan afterwards, and a Ferázee to boot ?”

“Listen then, and I will tell you my story.

“You must have heard of the *Kartá Bhajás* of Ghosepára, in the district of Nuddeá, a peculiar sect of Vysnubs who do not adhere strictly to caste rules and restrictions. The origin of the sect was with

Aul Chánd, a foundling discovered by a Satgope in his betel-garden. The child was then eight years old and of unknown parentage; but on growing bigger he declared himself to be a Bráhmaṇ, and an incarnation of Chaitanya. He proved his divinity by curing the blind and the lame, nay, by bringing back the dead to life; and it is from him that I draw my descent."


"That being so, do not the *Karta Bhajás* miss your absence at home? Who is the *Kartá* with them now?"

"Ah, you do not know the history of the faith, apparently. Aul Chánd was the first *Kartá*; but his children did not become *Kartás* after him. When he was taken ill and dying he asked for a cup of water which was brought to him by a Satgope named Rám Surn. Aul Chánd blessed him,

and said that his spirit would take its next birth in the womb of Rám Surn's wife, and Rám Doolal, the son of Rám Surn, became accordingly the second *Kartá*, and not the son of Aul Chánd; and ever since the *Kartáhood* has remained in the Satgope line, while the descendants of Aul Chánd are simply Bráhmans, most of them priests by profession."

"Well, how did you accept your loss of position, then?"

"Very cheerfully indeed. We all of us became *Kartá Bhajás*, acknowledging the lead of Rám Doolál and his descendants, and, caring nothing for our Bráhmanhood, sat side by side with all castes, including Satgopes and Mahomedans, and took our meals with them. Love is the foundation of the *Kartá* faith, and caste is necessarily un-



recognised by it, for caste presumes a distinction between man and man, which love will not allow."

"But all the *Kartá Bhajás* do not reject caste surely, for I know that there are some of them in my Zemindáry who are great sticklers of caste."

"Yes, and it was that which made me a Ferázee, and sent me out of Ghosepárá to Dowlutpore. I saw all the Hindu *Kartá Bhajás* around me relapsing into caste and idolatry; I saw with grief the *Dole* and *Rásjátrá* celebrated in Ghosepárá itself. 'This, surely, was not Aul Chánd's faith,' said I. 'Why should not those Mahomedans who have become *Kartá Bhajás* with us belong to the same brotherhood in all respects?' I consulted my own brother on these points; but we differed widely in opinion from each other. 'He was a Bráh-

man,' he said, 'as well as a *Kartá Bhajá*, and would remain both.' I said, 'I am solely and wholly a *Kartá Bhajá*, and to me a Bráhmaṇ and a Mahomendan are absolutely alike;' and, since the Hindu *Kartá Bhajás* did not like this doctrine any longer, I went over to the Mahomedans."

"Then your brother is still at Ghosepára, living in the bosom of his family, while you are wandering about the world as an outcast with me?"

"No; the family property at Ghosepára was sold, and the proceeds divided equally between us, when we disagreed on the point of faith to which I have referred. My brother is in your Zemindáry; he is no other than the priest of Naggesur Mahádeva, whom you consulted before you joined our cause at Nárkelberíáh."

"Ha! then it was the two *Kartá Bhajás*

that put their two heads together to make a Ferázee of me? I wonder that your brother, differing from you in belief, accepted your suggestions in respect to myself so cordially?"

"O, he has a very great heart, though he is essentially a man of peace. His wish for the emancipation of the country is as unbounded as your own."

The compliment intended for Monohur was as ineffective as an ill-shot arrow. His suspicions had been excited, and he felt already that he had been ensnared.

"The fact is, the Ferázees were much too clever for us," said he, "and we were both taken in by them—both you and I. Is not that the real truth, Bábájee?"

"Only partially so, my son. The Ferázees did want your money to help them through

their expedition. They had men in numbers, but no money to put them in motion. But I, as their agent, did not come to deceive you, for I had too high a respect for your house to think of harming it. I really hoped that the Ferázees would be able to break down the English power, and the help that my brother had received from your parents had made both of us very grateful to your family, and equally desirous to set you up as an independent Rájáh, not only over your own Zemin-dáry, but also over the neighbouring estates."

A sudden flush spread over the face of Monohur as he felt that he had been entrapped only for his money's sake, and he sat upright and motionless for some minutes, with his faculties absorbed by the reflections that were called forth. But it was too late to

get vexed over the matter now ; nor could he well be angry with Bissonáth, since his motives apparently were perfectly disinterested. He shook off his stupor therefore with an effort, and reopened the conversation by changing the theme.

“ And the girl you chose for me, Bábájee, what interest had you in her ? Why were you so anxious that I should marry her instead of the heiress of Páithulli, whom my mother had selected for me ? ”

“ Did you not like the girl I picked out for you ? ”

“ So well, indeed, that it was a great grief to me that I could not find her out before our flight from Nárkelberíáh, for I had promised to restore her to her parents when the fighting work was over.”

“ If she did make such an impression on

you, my son, my choice requires no further vindication. She is really a nice girl, and would have made a most excellent wife to you. My interest in her is that she is my niece—my sister's daughter."

"But she did not seem to recognise you as a relative in the least; she told me that she had no friends in the camp at all."

"She spoke according to her knowledge, my son. She was not aware of the relationship between us. To her, as to all else, I was simply a Ferázee and a Mahomedan."

"Were you able to extricate her from the power of the Ferázees before you left them?"

"Yes, that was the last act I did at Nárkelberíáh, within the two hours' grace you gave me before the starting time. She is now quite safe with her parents."

Monohur expressed his satisfaction by a sigh of relief.

“I should like very much to see her again,” said he, “though I don’t know if that will ever come to pass.”

“It may; but you must not be impatient. We are now looked out for from every direction, and love and love-making must stand over for a brighter day.”

CHAPTER XIII.

THE LOVES OF THE RIVERS.

THE collection of devotees at Báрни was very numerous, and the demonstration next morning was so animated that Monohur could not but feel greatly pleased with it. The river, under a bright blue sky, was simply magnificent, and the emotion called forth by the fervour of the pilgrims was almost overpowering.

“ Why, Bábájee, you don’t seem to appreciate the excitement around us. Surely the scene must be as new to you as it is to me ? ”

“ New to me ? No, my son, life is new to you, but not to me ; and I have visited this

place before. I was for twenty years abstracted from the world, that is, before I became a Ferázee; and my wanderings during that period were very extensive, and enabled me to trace the Gungá from the ocean to its source."

"Indeed! Why, then, you must have been very happy in that way, at least, and I really envy your good fortune, Bábájee. But is it not true then that the Gungá descends from heaven, as the sages tell us?"

"Of course it is; and we *Sunyásis* are able to trace the river only up to its earthly source, not beyond that. The Gungá, the Brahmapootra, and the Sindhoo all descend from heaven, coming down at almost the same identical spot, from which they separate to wander over the earth in different directions."

“Did you trace all the three rivers to that point?”

“No, we took up the line of the Ganges only, and could not trace it beyond Gángotri, its earlier course being concealed under a glacier or iceberg. The snow-bed we saw was about four *kos* long, one *kos* broad, and having a depth incalculable; and the cold was so intense there that we felt our bones freezing and cracking for all the fire we could keep ablaze.”

“Well, and what did you see there?”

“O, the visible source of the Bhágiratty is a *cunda*, or cell, from which the water was seen to be perpetually oozing out, forming very small rills, about one hundred or so in number. These are called ‘Weepers,’ from the manner in which they fall and the noise they make in falling; and the *cunda*

they come from is of the sacred lake named Máñosorobar, of which you may probably have heard before. The 'Weepers,' joining form a rivulet which dashes itself from rude mountains, with which nothing in Lower India can be compared in wildness and fear. The Jáhnvi, another mountain streamlet, darts from glens that are, if possible, even more savage and terrific, after which the two currents join amid avalanches of snow. After this there is a succession of falls from rock to rock, while the whole scene around bristles with frightful precipices, cedar forests, and sharp, snowy peaks."

"What a magnificent sight that must be indeed! and what would I not give to have a look at it! You say that the altitudes you describe are terrific in their inaccessibility. But is there any real danger there to meet with?"

“Yes, there is. Large snakes abound in the mountain gorges through which the river flows, and *Rákshases* are known to inhabit them.”

“But why should *Rákshases* live in parts so remote and lonely? They can have nothing there to live upon?”

“The mountains are full of gold and silver, and these belong to the *Rákshases* who keep watch over them. There are wild animals there upon which they feed.”

“And the Brahmapootra? Is the source of that river equally lonesome and wild?”

“I cannot speak of it from personal knowledge, my son, but I have been told by other *Sunyásis*, who had prosecuted their inquiries along that line, that the Brahmapootra issues from the same *cunda* which sends out the Ganges, the direction taken by the stream being only different, and that the rocks

around it are as wild as any, the torrent dashing headlong from them in cascades, till it forms into a regular river, called in different places by different names, as the Pákhui, the Hladini, and the Sánpoo."

"O, *Sunyási*, lead me to the heights you have visited, and I shall be beholden to you for ever. Will you help me to see them?"

"It is not possible for me to do so, my son; I have become old now, and my limbs are no longer as flexible as they were before, and could not scale the precipices I have described; nor could you go thither, Monohur, without renouncing the prospects of home, affluence, and position, perhaps for ever."

There was a pause, which was broken by the *Sunyási* drawing the attention of his companion to the sound of the bell that was tolling in the shrine of Lakshmi-Naráyana.

“That is the bathing invitation, my son, and if you go to the spot now you will hear another account of the rivers there from the mouth of the *Pooroheet*, very different from what you have just heard from me.”

“What is it? I should like to hear every account of the rivers, to be sure, though I am very unwilling to receive any from such a repulsive chatterer as the priest there. Don’t you know the story yourself?”

“I do; I have heard it before, and will recite to you what I have heard.

“Many, many thousand years ago the Gungá, the Brahmapootra, and the Sindhoo were living beings—mountain-gods, not unlike the mountaineers to be yet seen at the foot of the Snowy Range. Gungá was a girl, the daughter of Himávan, the sovereign of the mountains, and her youthful playmates

were Brahmapootra and Sindhoo, the former the son of Bruhmá, the latter the heir of a neighbouring chief. The children played and quarrelled, and made love, and grew up together, just as other children have done, and do to the present day ; but when Gungá became of a marriageable age her parents had a difficulty in deciding which of her two lovers should marry her. The father favoured the suit of Sindhoo ; but the mother liked the son of Bruhmá better, and Gungá was partial to her mother's choice. Old Himávan, however, refused to give way to the predilections of either wife or daughter, and though Gungá cried till her eyes were red, she made no impression on her father. Then said Gungá to herself, ' Why stay here at all ? I would rather wander all over the earth, and even end by drowning myself in

the sea, than contribute to the disappointment and grief of Brahmapootra ;' and she hid herself in the *cunda* for one whole night, the 'Weepers' representing the tears she shed.

"On regaining her composure Gungá prepared resolutely for her flight.

"'If I escape in my present form,' said she to herself, 'my father's people are sure to follow up and find me out. I shall change myself into a river and elude them.'

"She accordingly changed herself into a rivulet which ran down the slopes of the mountains and meandered at their base, till, after much floundering, she was fairly out of her father's domains, when she assumed the form of a full developed stream to sweep adown the plains.

"Great was the grief at home when

father and mother found that their only child was nowhere to be found. They blamed each other to begin with, as is usual on such occasions, and then sent servants after the fugitive in every direction, but all to no purpose. Sindhoo and Brahmapootra also started in search of the missing maiden, and emulated with each other in their exertions, forgetting their mutual dislikes and differences for the time.

“ ‘How should we go after her, brother?’ asked Sindhoo.

“ ‘No one can run faster than a river,’ replied Brahmapootra, ‘and if we stream down after her in that fashion, each taking a different route, one or other will surely be able to overtake her.’

“ ‘Right,’ said Sindhoo, and he rushed headlong through the western valleys, wash-

ing down rocks and tearing up trees by their roots ; while Brahmapootra sped with equal vehemence towards the east, through gullies and ravines, sweeping out hills from his course. Fast ran the rival lovers in search of the missing fair, and the further they went the more furious they became in their flow.

“ ‘You have taken a wrong direction, brother,’ said the mountain-goat to Sindhoo, ‘and should rectify your course.’

“ ‘In what direction should I rectify it?’ asked the impetuous youth ; but the goat had commenced browsing on the hill-side and would give no reply, whereupon Sindhoo turned south-west, not doubting that that was the right way to pursue. Swifter and swifter flowed the river, and angrier and angrier it became every hour on finding that

its swiftness was not crowned with success ; and in this mood of mind it tumbled headlong into the sea.

“ Brahmapootra also had made great haste in pursuing the course he had adopted, and was tearing right through untrodden slopes and swamps towards the land of the pig-eating Chinese, when the *Sunkochil*, or white-headed kite, told him that he was toiling wide out of the track.

“ ‘ Whitherwards should I go then ? ’ asked he of the kite.

“ ‘ You should double back westward, and, after passing a hundred *kos* or so in that direction, should leave it for the south to overtake your beloved.’

“ The bounding torrent doubled back at once with such force as to tear down a part of the mountain-ramparts of Assam, and

then sped through the valley westward as vehemently as before, till the kite stopped him again above the Gáro hills.

“‘Go downwards now, my son,’ said he, ‘through the fragrant lawns before you, and, if you run fast enough, you are sure to overtake Gungá before she drowns herself in the sea’

“Such is the wild story that the priests here have related from generation to generation, to account for the junction of the two rivers at this particular spot, and the tolling bell even now commemorates the hour of their union, which is the most propitious time for bathing in the confluence.”

“The tale is a singularly beautiful and poetic one,” exclaimed Monohur, “and I was just endeavouring to jot it down in verse. But I am a more unapt scholar, I find, than

I thought, and have not been able to follow you."

Bissonáth took up the leaf on which Monohur had been scribbling. Only three stanzas were written, which may be here translated and immortalised :—

GUNGÁ'S FLIGHT.

A FRAGMENT.

I.

Himávan, lord of mountains rude,
Where hidest thou thy crystal bower,
Midst jagged rocks by thunders torn,
O'er which the leafless cedars tower?
The home where Gungá laughed and played,
Chasing the wild-goat o'er the steep,
Or shouting with the eagle's young,
Or bounding with the torrent's leap!

II.

A vision bright has crossed my eyes :
Methinks I see the mountain-maid,
Beaming with looks of eager joy,
Bursting adown the ice-clad glade;
Followed by hunters young and bold,
Of noble mien and daring eye,
Fit lovers of a nymph so fair,
Who for her love tumultuous vie.

III.

Sindoo, a stripling tall and fair,
A neighbour's child, the father loves ;
Pákhin bold, great Bruhmá's son,
The mother into rapture moves :
The maid herself no preference owns,
For both she feels a sister's flame ;
Or, if for one a stronger love,
She does not know that passion's name.

* * * *

“ Ah, I also could tag verses in my youth, Monohur,” said the *Sunyási*; “ illiterate though I be ; but the fire has long died out of me, and, I may say, the penchant for the trade likewise. You too must leave by the poem now, I mean for the moment only, and make haste to bathe in the confluence as the other devotees are doing, or we shall miss the most propitious hour, and may give rise to suspicions also.”

CHAPTER XIV.

A MYSTERIOUS LETTER.

A FEW days after the river-bathing at Bární there was a great commotion in the little town of Comercolly, in the Pubná district, which lies on the banks of the Gorái, about thirty miles to the west of the sacred confluence. The crime of dacoity may be said to be one of the national institutions of Bengal, and, if the number of cases has since decreased, the state of things was very different some fifty years ago, when recognised gangs existed almost in every district, and threats used openly to be sent by them to houseowners that their houses would be attacked if security were not purchased by a

money-payment, to be left at a certain specified place, generally the foot of a tree in some unfrequented part of the country. Almost all the attacks were projected in the open air, after which the conspirators invariably made a *poojáh* to Káli, their guardian deity, before starting on their expeditions. They always had their *massáls* and *láttees* with them; but swords, *koorálees*, and guns were more difficult to come at, and were therefore less frequently used. The *láttees* referred to were very formidable weapons; usually, but not always, made of bamboos fresh cut and made smooth, and often encircled by large iron nails put in at irregular intervals, or bound by a heavy iron ring at the end. Armed with these clubs the robbers proceeded to the house they intended to attack, usually in a large body,

and some four or five hours after nightfall; and they always attempted to effect their entrance by the *Khirkée*, or back-door, lest the main-door, being generally of tough make, should take a longer time to demolish. A continual shouting or yell was kept up to dishearten the inmates and their friends, and prevent their attempting any opposition, and, after having gained entrance into the house, a strenuous endeavour was made to get hold of the master of it, or its mistress in his absence, threats being held out to the captive that he would be burnt with *massáls* if full information of the property in the house were not given. Some general rules were also followed for self-preservation in making the attack, among which were : (1) that, if any of the party were known to the people attacked, such persons

never went inside the house, but remained outside of it as pickets or *ghántidárs*; (2) that, immediately after the plundering was over, and before the plunderers left the house, all the lights with them were put out; and (3) that, until fear of discovery had entirely blown over, the property plundered was kept buried or otherwise concealed, while the plunderers themselves remained almost apart from each other.

The attack at Comercolly was on the house of a banker named Bharat Coondoo, and was made by a party armed mostly with bludgeons. There were some billhooks, or *kooráleees*, also with them, to break open the doors and strong chests, and the firing of one gun or pistol was heard, which principally cowed down all thoughts of opposition.

“How many are they?” asked the master of the house of his son.

“O, sir, some thirty or thirty-five,” said the latter in reply, “and the number seems to be increasing.”

“What can we do then to prevent their getting into the house? Their hootings and yells hinder my making myself heard by the servants.”

“The servants, sir! They have all bolted, and, I think, we also had better secret ourselves.”

“Do just as you like, then,” said the old man, tartly; “I do not move from this place, either for fear of the dacoits or in imitation of the servants.” And, by the time the dacoits effected their entry into the house, the son was fairly ensconced within a *moorye*, or receptacle for

grain, whither the women had fled before him.

The robbers finding the old man by himself laid hands on him to begin with.

“Where is your money, father?”

“Money? There is none in the house now. We sent down all our money to Calcuttá last week, after receiving that threatening letter from you.”

“You are trifling with us, old man,” said the chief robber, sternly, “and that may cost you your life. Our spies are everywhere, and we know that nothing has been sent out of your house to this moment. Will you come out with your money now?”

“I have told you already that I have no money here. How can I give you what I have not?”

The dacoits became very angry; but the

old man stood erect and unshaken, and they were obliged to leave him to commence operations on his property. All the chests and almiráhs in the house were broken open, and their contents scattered about—including *thállees*, *kuttorás*, and clothing; but though they searched every nook and corner no money was forthcoming.

Getting furious from their ill success they now touched the old man with their torches, and he was burnt in several places, but would not cry out in pain. Old Coondoo had a great soul in a small body, and even the robbers were affected by his uncomplaining anguish.

“Go out,” said the women in the *moorye* to his son, “and try to extricate the old man from their hands.”

“I can do nothing to help him,” answered

the brave youth, "but may aggravate his sufferings by attempting a rescue. I am best where I am, and will have leisure here to ripen my plans."

What plans he was ripening was never known. The old man still stood his ground without making any disclosures, and the dacoits, having collected together a large quantity of household goods, desisted from molesting him further, being anxious to get off with their booty. The lumber collected was almost priceless, and the plunderers on coming out of the house were twitted by their own *ghántidárs* on that score. But there was no time for recrimination now, as the villagers were turning out in numbers; and they decamped in a hurry to prevent their being pursued.

"You are a very brave chap indeed," said

the villagers to the banker's son, when he came out from his hiding place after the departure of the dacoits. "You could not, of course, think of standing by the old man since you were protecting the women?"

"Ah, I could not come out because my *láttee* was not forthcoming. What could I do among so many men without a *láttee* to strengthen my arm?"

"Why," said his better-half, "your *láttee* was where it is always kept, and is there even now. It did not, of course, follow you to the *moorye* to thrust itself into your hand." And there was a general laugh against the would-be hero at the happy repartee of his wife.

The villagers busied themselves greatly in going after the dacoits, but none of the persons implicated had been recognised,

owing to their having put out their lights immediately after the completion of their crime, and there were no traces of them therefore to follow, beyond some footmarks, bits of cotton and clothes, broken *pettárás*, wisps of tow, and the like. All these were diligently tracked up, but only to the banks of the Gorái, after which there were, of course, no marks to pursue.

Situated almost on the brink of the river here, stands the temple of Chámoondi, or Káli, the guardian deity of Comercolly. It was built by a king named Bándé, at the spot where he had seen the goddess face to face. The king was fond of eating the *pábdá* fish, and retained a fisherman to procure it fresh for him every day. One day the man was not able to get it, which made the king very angry with him, so that he was com-

pelled to seek safety in flight. Having escaped to the jungles he prayed to Chámoondi for protection, and she appeared to him and told him that he would get a supply of the required fish every day if he came to fish at a particular spot on the river-side that was pointed out to him. The fisherman acted accordingly, and everything went on smoothly afterwards for months.

“How are you able to bring this particular fish every day, in season and out of season?” asked the Rájáh’s favourite wife one day, of the fisherman.

“O, mother, my life depends upon it. Your royal husband would kill me if I failed to do so.”

“Ah, that I understand; but I want to know how you manage to do it. Where do you get the fish from?”

"I cannot satisfy your curiosity, mother, on that point ; and you should not force me to speak of it, if only for your husband's sake."

This made the lady suspicious without abating her curiosity, and she set a servant over the fisherman to watch him. But the goddess Chámoondi was incensed that there should be any espionage over one favoured by herself, and, assuming a fearful appearance, she seated herself on the river-bank when the fisherman approached it. Both the fisherman and the servant were equally startled by the sight, and the latter ran back as fast as his fear permitted him, to apprise his mistress of what he had seen. He tottered as he approached her, and would have fallen down if the king, who happened to be in the apartment at the time, had not seized him by the arm.

“What is the matter with you, man?” asked the king in a rather displeased tone.

The servant had hardly breath to explain, but eventually succeeded in gasping out a reply. The tale was not long to tell, but was told so hysterically that it had to be repeated several times before it could be understood.

“I don’t expect your majesty to believe in what I have said,” urged the man finally, conscious of the strange character of the account he had given, “but your majesty may yet see the appearance for yourself, and decide if my story be true or otherwise.”

“Yes, I must certainly assure myself on that point,” answered the king, “if only to mollify the goddess, should she have really got offended with us;” and he went out with his whole Court to the river-bank to appease the deity by his submission.

Chámoondi was easily conciliated, and the fisherman was allowed to fish on the spot as before; and the grateful king raised to the goddess the temple that stands there to this day.

“I did not expect to find you here!” exclaimed Bábjee Bissonáth, who was performing his devotions at this shrine, and was somewhat taken aback by the sudden appearance of a half-masked man before him who seemed to have something important to tell him. “Do you want anything with me?”

“I have only this letter to deliver to you, or I would not have intruded.”

“A letter? From whom?”

“Read it; I shall wait till you have done so.”

The *Sunyási* glanced over the billet hurriedly and looked up with wondering eyes.

“ You know what this letter speaks of ? ”

“ I do.”

“ What is your opinion of the enterprise it refers to ? ”

“ It has its risks ; but the cause is good, and the men engaged in it are stout and brave.”

“ Ah ! I have heard stories to the same tune before, and am only surprised at my own weakness in having suffered myself to be gulled by them. But I won't endanger you by detaining you longer. You had a hand in the dacoity here, I suppose, and must be eager to escape ? ”

“ O, that is not a matter of much moment to me. You know that I cannot be easily taken. But if you have no further orders for me there is no need for my running any risk at all ; ” and shortly after the gallop of a tattoo was heard outside, though in what

direction it went the *Sunyási* was not able to determine.

All the perpetrators of the dacoity had escaped out of the city by this time; but the Ghát Dárogáh was yet on the look out for them. He was watching the river with particular care, and, when on the third day after the event he saw a boat passing down with a number of men on board, his suspicions were easily aroused.

“Ha! They must all be in that boat, I fancy, for it seems to be very crowded;” and the boat being stopped twenty-one persons were found in it, having with them a pistol, a billhook, flints, powder, and shots for the pistol, and a number of *láttees*.

“Whither bound, friends? and on what errand?”

“O, we are going to take up a boat of

ours which has sunk further down in the river."

"Take up a boat with *láttees*, pistol, powder, and shots?"

"There are goods in that boat, and some persons must be left behind to protect them?"

"Ah, that is rather well-said. But are there no goods in this boat also? I must open your *gántrees* to see. O goodness! what are these? Two silver *bállás*, a gold *háslee*, a silver *bánk*, so many *thállás*, *lotáhs*, and *kuttorás*; a load of *dhotis* and *doputtás* also; and, what have we here again? a *gámchá* and a bunch of plantains even, I suppose for the happy few who are to watch over the boat that is to be recovered? They must eat something of course, if only to prevent them from falling asleep on their watch, and why not plantains?"

The Dárogáh grinned, as policemen only know how to grin. The dacoits were all captured, all with the exception of their chief, who had escaped none knew in what way. The property which had been carried off by them was also wholly recovered, owing to their having had no opportunity to secret any portion of it; and all Comercolly sent up a howl of joy, and sang pæans in the Dárogáh's praise.

CHAPTER XV.

HOOKEK AGAIN.

It was a late hour in the evening, when Monohur and the *Sunyási* came back to their lodgings at Comercolly, after having wandered all over the town in the sweltering heat.

“I am fearfully knocked up with fatigue!” exclaimed the former, “and would go to bed at once, Bábájee, if you have no objection to it?”

“But surely not without taking a morsel of food, my son?”

“O, I don’t think I shall be able to swallow anything at present. I have had too

much of excitement the whole day, and what I now want is rest and rest only."

"Then you won't sleep well either," said the *Sunyási*, "for sleep under excitement is sure to be visited by bad dreams. Come, let us sit in the open air awhile till you have recovered your composure, and then you can eat or go to sleep as you like best;" and he spread out a mat on the grass before their door, on which they both lay down lazily, one at least being rather drowsily inclined.

"The sun was very hot to-day, Bábjee, and that accounts for my unwonted weariness. I was never before so excited or knocked up."

"Shall I give you a dose of medicine then to brace up your nerves, or reserve what I have to say to you till to-morrow?"

"What do you mean, Bábjee? Have you got any news from home to tell me?"

“No, my son ; but I have something else to speak of which the open air is the best place to reveal in.”

“It must be about the dacoity here then, I suppose. Have you any further information in regard to it?”

“No, not much. What do you want to know about it? and how does it concern either you or me?”

“O, it does not concern us of course in the least; but I heard them say that all the dacoits have not been captured, though the Dárogáh affects that not more than one man, if any at all, has escaped him; and I should like to know the truth about it.”

“It is hardly a matter worth troubling our heads about, Monohur. Twenty-one men have been taken, and if thirty-five men were concerned in the business, as Bharat Coon-

doo's son affects, there should be fourteen yet at large. I think, however, that the Dárogáh is more likely to be right in his reckoning than the young Coondoo, who did not show himself anywhere while the plundering was going on. What I know for certain is this only, that the leader of the gang has not been captured."

"What makes you say that, Bábájee? How can you be certain on that point?"

"I have reason to know it, my son, because I met with the man at the temple of Chámoondi, and did not see him afterwards among the twenty-one men who were brought in."

"You met him? Why, you astonish me. What business had you with him, or he with you?"

"He only came to deliver a letter to me,

and I may as well tell you that he is the Naráil Báboo we know of, who helped us in the burglary at Boná Ghát, and took so distinguished a part afterwards as my scout in the Nárkelberíáh affair. But of course this is between you and me. Our knowledge of him must on no account be spoken of, or we shall be getting into trouble for matters with which we have no concern."

"I understand you, Bábájee, and shall be very careful. But what is this letter you have received through him?"

"It was about that that I wanted to speak to you, Monohur. It refers to another rising against the English power in another part of the country, and invites me to join it. Would you like to make one with me?"

"I would do anything to please you, Bábájee; and you know already that I have

no penchant for the English name. But I have had no tidings from home for a long time, and I am really very anxious to go back to my mother."

"Ah, you hesitate to take part in such business again, I see, and I don't disapprove of your prudence certainly. I only thought you had devoted yourself to the good cause, otherwise I would not have asked you at all."

"You are hitting far out of the mark, Bábájee, I assure you. Can I not go back to Boná Ghát for once only and then join you afterwards in the enterprise?"

"If you consult your own safety, my son, you should not go to Boná Ghát at all at present; and, as for the good cause, it will not wait for the best recruit. The time has not arrived for you to see your mother; you will be captured the moment you get there.

You have only to decide whether you will go with me, or hie to the *Tirthastháns* by yourself alone?"

"No, no; if I cannot go to my mother I will not desert you. But must I not ask in what direction you go, and what this new scheme is?"

"You shall know all about it, my son. First read the letter itself, for it is very brief, and I shall then tell you everything more that I know on the subject yet."

The sleepiness of Monohur had left him a good while already, and he had a long conversation with the *Sunyási* in the night; and early the next morning the two travellers were seen going out of the town, equipped as palmers, just as they had entered it. It is hardly necessary for us to follow them through all their wanderings. It will be sufficient simply to record that they were seen about

two months after at a place named Nirsá, on the Grand Trunk Road, in the district of Mánbhoom.

“We have now to go straight south to reach our destination,” said the *Sunyási*.

“And a weary route it seems to be,” murmured Monohur, “seeing that there is nothing but hills and jungles around us.”

“Yes, my son, the route is a very dreary and monotonous one, as you say,” replied the *Sunyási*; “but, since we cannot make it more pleasant by our grumblings, we had best get onwards as patiently as we may.”

“But night is approaching, father,” said Monohur. “We must rest somewhere now at all events.”

“Let us hasten our pace then, that we may reach the temple of Mudden Gopál in time,” said the *Sunyási*, “for we shall get no other resting-place here I am sure;” and they

hurried on till the temple of Mudden Gopál was reached.

It was a beautiful stone temple, situated on the side of a tank of great sanctity, and the lodging-huts for pilgrims were scattered all around it in numbers. The story current at the place is that the tank and the temple were both made by a Rájáh named Duryadhon, who was cured of leprosy on this spot. He had been a great sinner and was afflicted by a most inveterate type of the disease. The *Kobirájes* and *Rojáhs* consulted by him were unable to do anything to alleviate his misery, and his *Tirthas* to sacred shrines were equally ineffectual, though he visited many of them. At last, when he was passing this way, an old woman of the neighbourhood pointed out to him a small *cunda*, beside which an undistinguished round stone was quartered.

“Great, O king, is the might of Mudden Gopál, and if you dip yourself in that *cunda* there you may perhaps be wholly cleansed and healed.”

The Rájáh tried the *cunda* accordingly, and the experiment was very successful, for he was completely healed within a few days; and, being grateful for the favour conferred on him by the deity, he amplified the *cunda* into a tank and built a stone temple on its side to accommodate the god. The god is no longer so undistinguished as he was in the past, for the round stone is now almost wholly encompassed by gold and precious stones; and the tank remains and has the reputation of being a cleanser of sins, though its miraculous ulcer-healing virtue has since been lost or exhausted.

“Well, we had better take up our abode

in the hut at the foot of that rock there," said Monohur. "I see that the stone is largely sculptured, and should like to examine the figures carved on it by the streaming moonlight."

"I agree," said the *Sunyási*; "the hut occupies a secluded site, and will suit us nicely. The sculpture on the rock represents the story of Prahlád and Hiranya Kasyápa, which the temple-priest will relate to you for a *dumree*."

"As if you could not do it as well, Bábájee?"

"No, my son, not this night, surely; for I have to make many arrangements here before we proceed further, and must have some time to myself to get through my work."

Monohur cast a reproachful glance at the



Sunyási by way of reply, but, his curiosity being excited, he did not tarry to waste more words with him. The figures cut on the rock, he could see, were those of a man-lion tearing to pieces the body of an *Asoor* of tremendous size, in the presence of a boy of ten or twelve years; and the priest was already explaining the myth to the people who had congregated around him at the temple-door.


“The giant,” said the priest, “had by his austerities extorted a boon from Mahádeva, which he regarded as equivalent to a gift of immortality. He would not die, said the deity’s words of assurance, either by the hand of god, man, or beast; not on the earth, water, or air; not either in the day, or in night. ‘I am indestructible then,’ said the *daiitya* in his pride, ‘just as much as the

gods themselves ;' and this made him insufferably arrogant. He now spoke of the gods with contempt, and especially of Mudden Gopál, because his son, Prahlád, was devotedly attached to the worship of that divinity. The father tried to school his son to a different faith, and, failing in that, endeavoured to do away with him. He was hurled down from a hill, but was uninjured ; placed on a burning pyre, but the fire would not scathe him ; thrown into the sea, but the waves threw him back on the shore ; trampled over by an elephant, but without being hurt in the least.

“ ‘How hast thou escaped such trials, boy?’

“ ‘By the favour of Mudden Gopál, my constant protector.’

“ ‘Where is he then ? I see nothing before me but a ball of stone.’



“ ‘He is everywhere, and present at all times.’

“ ‘Shall I find him in this crystal pillar?’ asked the king, pointing mockingly to an architectural ornament of his palace which stood nearest to him.

“ ‘Yes,’ said the boy, ‘for nothing is or can be without him.’

“The tyrant shattered the pillar with one stroke of his battle-axe, when out darted from it a terrific figure, bearing the general semblance of a man, but the face and fore-claws of a lion. Hiranya Kasyápa was seized by the monster, placed on his thigh, and torn to pieces. The assailant was neither god, man, nor beast; his victim was destroyed neither on the earth, sea, nor air; he was torn to pieces at twilight, which is neither day nor night.”

“But, O, sir!” exclaimed Monohur, who

now remembered having often heard the story in his childhood from his mother, “ was it not Vishnu who assumed the form of a man-lion to destroy the infidel ? ”

“ Yes, my son ; but you must not get confounded by names, for the gods have each a thousand names, and Vishnu and Mudden Gopál are one.”

CHAPTER XVI.

THE FOREST RISING.

THE Jungle Mehals embrace a wide expanse of territory, of some sixty miles in length and eight in breadth, lying between the Bengal district of Midná pore and the semi-independent State of Rewáh. The soil is rocky, and overspread with thick forests which are well nigh impervious in several places. The Zemindárs are called "Rájáhs" by their ryots; but their ancestors were all freebooters, and the ryots their banditti. Peace was a thing unknown among them, for they were always either quarrelling with each other, or raiding into the countries contiguous to their own. So long as they

were in power they were strong enough to keep all outside depredators in check in their direction; and it was not till they were weakened by their internal feuds that the Mahrattás were able to raid into Bengal.

One of the most troublesome of these robber-chiefs was the Rájáh of Dhulbhoom, whose territory was contiguous to Midná-pore. The rule in Dhulbhoom had always been for the son of the *Pát Ráni*, or the Rájáh's first wife, to succeed to the *Ráj*; but the practice was set aside by the British Government when it decided, on the death of Rájáh Vikram Náráyan, that his eldest son, Rughoo Náth Sing, who was the son of his second wife, should succeed to the estate. The *Bhoomij*, or the people of the Bhoom, did not accept this decision loyally, and gave audible expression to their discontent.

“What business has the British Government,” they cried, “to interfere with our laws and customs? Can we not defend them like men, and should we not do so?”

“Will you swear loyalty to me, then?” exclaimed Lakshman, the son of the *Pát Ráni*, who was seated in their midst at the foot of a tree. “If you do, and obey me, behold I am ready to oppose tooth and nail, and break down, the English power.”

The *Bhoomij* swore fidelity and obedience to Lakshman with great eagerness, and he was easily persuaded to believe that they were prepared for action, which in reality they were not. It takes a long time for grumbling and discontent to develope into treason, but this the aspirant chief did not understand.

“You are going to expose yourself to

great danger, if not to certain destruction," said an old, white-headed priest to Lakshman. "First be sure of your men before you declare yourself."

"They have sworn to obey me, and I have pledged myself to fight for our independence. What can either do more? God will not abandon us in such a cause, and a priest, of all others, should not endeavour to dissuade me from it."

The attempt was a mad one, but Lakshman's heart was on fire, and he was unable to control himself; and so the foresters rushed recklessly into the abyss of danger without any preparation adequate to the occasion. The result was as might have been expected. Very few of the *Bhoomij* adhered to their chief to the last; and an interval of great anxiety was followed by a

surprise, and Lakshman, being run down, was captured and thrown into prison.

“He has been severely wounded, and cannot survive long,” observed several of the people now in dismay.

“That is truth indeed, and the greater the shame on us that it is so,” replied many others; and they all began to regret that they had not joined the cause heart and soul, as they had promised.


The men got infuriated when Lakshman died; and Rughoo Náth Sing, the Government nominee, dying a short time after there was a general and well-matured rising throughout the Bhoom in support of Gungá Náráyn, Lakshman’s son. The ostensible cause of this fully developed rebellion was the oppression practised on the ryots by Mádhub Sing, the Dewán of Rughoo Náth,

who had undertaken the management of the *Ráj* during the minority of Rughoo Náth's son. Gungá Náráyn decided on overturning the administration of Mádhub to begin with, and seven thousand foresters stood arrayed on his side.

The same old man who had before dissuaded Lakshman from hurrying heedlessly into rebellion, was now similarly at the elbow of his son.

"O, my son," said he, "take heed what you do. The English are sure to uphold the Dewán's authority, and, if they capture you, will they not repeat on you the treatment your father received at their hands?"

"Be it so," said the young man, proudly. "Our fate is with the gods. But the son of Lakshman must not hesitate at such an hour to avenge his father's death if he can."




“The young chief is right,” roared out the *Bhoomij* by whom he was encircled. “Let us, at least, smoke out Mádhub from his lair, and offer him up as a sacrifice to the shade of our deceased master, in whose capture he was chiefly instrumental;” and they went and attacked Mádhub in the *Rájbáree*, and got hold of him.

“What shall we do with our prisoner now?” asked Gungá Náráyn of the vengeful spirits around him; and some suggested that he should be put into prison, others that he should be blinded, others again that he should be decapitated.

At this moment the mother of Gungá Náráyn, Lakshman’s widow, came out to the spot, with dishevelled hair and the face of a *Rákshasi*, and in a peremptory voice demanded to be heard.

“I am a soldier’s widow and a soldier’s mother,” said she, “and have come out to make a request to you which you must not refuse. The English have no business to be in our country, far less to interfere with and upset our time-honoured customs and institutions. How happens it that they are able to do so with impunity? It is not that they are really stronger than we are, but that our gods have got offended with us for our neglect of them. Carry your captive, then, to the hills, before the shrine of Ránkini, and drench her temple-floor with his blood. When the gods are propitiated you will easily drive the palefaces from your fatherland.”

The proposal was received with a burst of applause, and the victim was carried uproariously to the shrine of Ránkini. Gungá



Naráyn smote him with his battle-axe, after which all the other chiefs who had joined him pierced the victim successively with their spears, by which they all became equally implicated in his death, and over the blood of the slain they swore to free Dhulbhoom from the English yoke.

The country was now at the mercy of Gungá Náráyn, and he took formal possession of the palace of his ancestors, from which he was proclaimed Rájáh, which of itself brought him a considerable accession of strength, while his agents went out far and wide to collect together all the disaffected people of Bengal for one united effort to sweep out foreign domination from the land. Among the recruits thus brought in were Kharga Báhádoor and the *Sunyási*, and by them stood the old priest before

spoken of as having dissuaded both Lakshman and Gungá Náráyn from committing themselves into treason, but who was now as enthusiastic in the good cause as any other person present, although he could barely stagger about where the rest were stalking with impetuosity and pride.


The Government authorities were now seriously alarmed, and preparations were made in haste to put down the insurrection. Three regiments of Native Infantry and eight guns were sent to operate against them, under the lead of Captain Williamson, a young officer of great promise. But the difficulties they had to encounter were great. There were no roads to go by, and the cart-tracks, which were the only roads, were in some places mere ruts, and in others so overgrown with jungle that it was more easy

to get lost among them than to thread them out successfully, and it was with much trouble, therefore, that the guns and ammunition could be moved forward.

The insurgents were in great spirits. They were commanded in chief by Gungá Náráyn, assisted by a council of leaders which included both the *Sunyási* and Kharga Báhá-door. The youth and handsome appearance of the latter made him a great favourite with the wild jungle-races, and his reckless daring was spoken of with praise even by their veteran chieftains. The force mustered together was not less than fifteen thousand in tale, and Gungá Náráyn was in daily expectation of being joined by another equally strong party from Jushpore. It was an honest expression of opinion, therefore, of Subadár Rahamut Khán to Captain William-

son, that if he did not attack the insurgents quickly he would not be able to defeat them easily, and Captain Williamson made every effort to act in accordance with the advice.

The English forces were hurried through the forests to confront the enemy, and came up to a pool of water remarkable for nothing in particular but a high curtain of shrubs around it. In advance were Subadár Rahamut Khán and Captain Williamson, who peered cautiously about them as they went along, and in a short time they were near enough to discover, through the gaps of the heathery screen, the disposition of the insurgent army on the other side of the pool. The bronzed countenances, short beards, and dark, staring eyes of the foresters gave them a strange, and not unwarlike appearance; but they betrayed no discipline to speak of, and were miserably armed, and



most of them were seen lying down, as if much fatigued, on the ground.

“They are savage to look at, Subadár,” said Captain Williamson, “but I don’t think they will stand to fight with us.”

“Not likely,” replied the officer addressed, “but still our best course is to fall on them suddenly, so as to surprise and startle them, and then they are sure to dissolve, without waiting for a second attack.”

Both Captain Williamson and the Subadár were, however, mistaken. The *Bhoomij* were indeed taken by surprise, but showed no wish to fly, and the fighting was maintained with an intensity of bravery which their opponents had certainly not expected, and by none more so than by a party of youthful warriors acting under the personal direction of Kharga Báhádoor.

“ They have stolen a march on us, the knaves ! ” cried that young leader, “ and have taken us unawares ; but let each do his duty boldly, and the disadvantage will be quickly remedied.” And his followers, thus encouraged, renewed the struggle with a great cry.

But the fight was still unequal, and to a great extent one-sided, as it had been, in fact, almost from the commencement, owing to the absolute impossibility of silencing the English guns ; and Gungá Náráyn, who had been watching the exertions of his men with great anxiety, saw that they were being beaten back almost at every point.

“ All is not over yet, but shortly will be,” said he, “ unless we can stop the firing of those infernal machines. The enterprise is a dangerous one. Will you undertake it, Kharga Báhádoor ? ”

“You honour me much by asking, and I appreciate your kindness.”

“But do you appreciate the danger of the attempt, likewise? I must not wheedle you on to an attack without pointing out the peril of it.”

“I know how to die, and you have warriors enough to replace me.”

“I deny the latter statement emphatically, my young friend : but hasten if you must go ; there is no time to lose.”

Kharga Báhádoor did go up against the guns with some thirty men, but, though the onset was dashing, their efforts were fruitless. They were beaten back again and again every time they rallied, and their final repulse led to the utter rout of the forest army, which filled the mind of Gungá Náráyn with despair.

The consequence of the defeat was the de-

sertion of the chiefs by almost all their followers, which obliged them to take refuge in the hills.

“Will you submit now?” asked the *Sunyási* of Gungá Náráyn, who was seething in white rage.

“Submit? Never! Let them catch me in the toils and kill me.”

“Why not go to the Larká Koles then, and try to raise them? They like the English rule as little as we do.”

“You say well,” said Gungá Náráyn, suddenly buoyed up with new hopes. “I should not fall without another effort surely.”

CHAPTER XVII.

REBELLION IN THE KOLEHÁN, AND HOW IT WAS EXTINGUISHED.

WITHIN a week after the defeat at Dhubhoom, Gungá Náráyn, with the remnants of his party, had repaired to the Kolehán, and had lost no time in opening the necessary negotiations with its native chieftains.

The Koles are a numerous people, occupying all the country from the jungles of Rámгурh and Házáreebágh to the confines of Gángpore and Sirgoojáh. They are naturally very inoffensive, but are exceedingly impressible, and get easily excited, if any attempt be made to oppress them. The tribal divisions among them are many, the

Larkás being held to be among the most valiant. The quarrel of these with the British Government was that the authority of the Rájpoor Zemindárs over them, which they had always repudiated, was upheld by the Government, which had led to their own *Mánkis*, or chiefs, being displaced to make room for Sikh and Mahomedan adventurers, who held many of their villages in farm. This was regarded as insufferable tyranny by them; and Gungá Náráyn had no difficulty in inducing them to make common cause with him against the English power. There was one peculiar obstacle, however, to get over, and this required much tact to deal with, as being nothing more or less than a question of precedence. The Larkás had their own leaders, the *Mánkis*, and would not accept the command in chief of Gungá Náráyn.

“My brother is welcome amongst us,” said the Kole spokesman to Gungá Náráyn, in a perfectly friendly tone; “and we are very willing indeed to join him against the common enemy. But a Larká never receives orders from any but his own chief; we shall march under our Mánkis only.”

“But there must be a directing head somewhere, my friends,” expostulated Gungá Náráyn. “Separate, distinct commands would inevitably lead to confusion and discomfiture.”

“Then why not make one of our leaders the chief? The Larká is a terrible warrior, and he despises the barkings of the English our quite as much as my brother can.”

“I know,” replied Gungá Náráyn, “that the Larká is strong and valiant. But, O, my brother, the white men are sorcerers, and

require artifice as much as valour to subdue them; and your tribe is too honest and open-hearted to circumvent their wiles and deceit."

The *Manki* was pleased, but would not give up the point of contention so easily, and there was a short silence before he replied.

"My brother is a great warrior," said he, "and we have the greatest confidence in him. But he must prove to us that he is fit to lead us in war before we submit to accept his command. We are at feud now with the Thákoor of Kharsáwan, a Rájpoot forced on us by the Government. The fellow is wily, as our brother says the English are. Let my brother lead us against him, and when he is able to defeat and humiliate him we shall willingly accept his lead against the English power."

“That is a very fair offer,” exclaimed Kharga Báhádoor. “Let us finish with the Thákoor of Kharsáwan first. We shall have ample time afterwards to make a joint move against our foreign oppressors.”

But the conquest of the Thákoor was easier to plan than to achieve. His fortress was too strong to be taken by a rabble army, and he refused to move out to give them battle.

“The Thákoor is a great chief, and has a wide-spread renown. Why does he remain cooped up within stone walls then when his enemies are calling on him to come out to meet them?” asked Kharga Báhádoor of the *Sunyási*.


“The Rájpoor is indeed as powerful as you say, my son; but he is knowing also. There is no need for the exhibition of his

valour at present. He expects to weary us out here before he will take the trouble to attack us."

Kharga Báhádoor looked discontented and vexed. He had anticipated an open fight, for which he was ready at all times; but there seemed to be no chance of coming to that immediately. The *Bhoomij* were crowding at the foot of the fort, but the fort was too careless to observe what was going on at its base.

At this moment a window of the edifice was thrown open, and obscured by the burly figure of the Thákoor making its appearance there to hold a parley with his enemies.

"Ha! foresters and barbarians!" exclaimed the chief, "what mean ye by mustering here in such numbers at the foot of my fort? And what is it ye want of me?"



“Our first demand of you,” said the irascible Gunga Náráyn, “is that you surrender your fort to us, and yourself with it.”

“Indeed!” replied the Thákoor, with a scornful laugh, “do you really ask so little of me? And may I inquire why I should surrender myself or my fort to you so complaisantly?”

“Because you cannot do otherwise,” cried out the *Sunyási*. “We have the means of capturing both if you resist.”

“Try to do so then, by all means. My castle is surely worth fighting for to me.”

“Do you refuse to surrender then?” asked Gungá Náráyn in a peremptory tone. “We want a definite and straightforward reply.”

“Well, I may say that I do ; may I not?”

asked the Thákoor, sneeringly in return. "Don't you see that I need do nothing but close this window to defend myself against your terrible resentment ; and has any warrior ever surrendered himself, or his fort, under such circumstances ? Be off, ye dogs, from my place, or I will pelt ye off with stones."

Saying this he closed the window as abruptly as he had opened it, which left his enemies no alternative but to attack the place. But the valour of the *Bhoomij* and the *Koles* made no impression on the rock-walls of the fortalice ; and, though they went round and round on all sides, they could discover no inlet that could easily be broken into. A chaos of rocks, surrounded by dense masses of virgin forest, begirt the castle on every side, and the assailants seemed almost entangled within the labyrinth into which they had penetrated.

“Well, what are we to do now?” asked Gungá Náráyn of his counsellors in despair.

“Nothing immediately,” answered the *Sunyási*. “Let us rest here for the night as well as we may. To-morrow morning we must get ladders ready to scale the rocks with.”

“On my word!” exclaimed Kharga Báhádoor, “that is a bright idea; and then we shall get into the fort and settle with the garrison easily.”

“Yes, when we are there,” replied Gungá Náráyn, rather peevishly. “The idea is a good one, and ought to be worked out; but it will not be a very easy matter to give effect to it, I fear.”

They lay that night among the gorse and the heather that surrounded the fort, but rose up with alacrity at daybreak to carry out

their plan. The morning was faultless, except that it was unusually cold, and the trees were roaring to the north wind. The ladders were got ready quickly, there being no lack of timber and osier-bands at the place; but it took them four good hours to fix them, after which several of the stout Larkás began to get up by them, and were accompanied by Gungá Náráyn and the other chiefs. But even the woman and children of the fort turned out now to repel the assailants; and they showed great adroitness and activity in pouring down brickbats and stony fragments on them.

“Good!” exclaimed the Thákoor, who superintended the defensive operations in person; “this scaling should cost them dear, at any rate, and, if they are able to get up eventually, why, we have enough of warriors here to receive them.”

“It is very improbable, my son, that they will reach us,” drily observed an old woman, who was trying to unfasten a huge mass of rock from its base, almost at the side of the chief; and, succeeding in lifting out the mass, she flung it down right on Gungá Náráyn, whom she had especially marked out for destruction. The fall of the rock drowned both the roar of the wind and the yells of the attacking party, and a fear fell on the latter when they saw their chief lying crushed beneath its weight.

Everything was now in confusion, both in the fort and out of it, and the invaders ran off in different directions, not knowing whither, and scarcely understanding wherefore. Kharga Báhádoor, the *Sunyási*, and some of the *Mankis* endeavoured to rally the fugitives, but in vain.

“It is only the loss of one man,” exclaimed

the first, "and surely we have other warriors here to replace him."

But the palladium of the *Bhoomij* was gone, and they showed no further appetite for the fight; and the Larkás, who had not been able to effect anything against the Thákoor hitherto, took it for granted that he was not to be conquered.

"I send you the head of Gungá Náráyn," wrote the Thákoor of Kharsáwan to the English commander. "Will you make me a Rájáh now, as I have so long besought the Government, or will you leave me to become one?"

They made him a Rájáh Báhádoor by return of post; and, the confederacy against the Government having broken up, Bissonáth and Monohur were obliged to assume their old names and decamp.

“Whither now?” asked Monohur of his guide.

“To the *Tirthasthāns* you spoke of. Men in our circumstances have no other refuge to fly to.”

CHAPTER XVIII.

A MOTHER'S DISTRESS.

LEAVING the discomfited warriors to follow their solitary wanderings the reader has now to return with us to their old homes, which the march of events has not hitherto allowed us to revisit.


It was a long time before the mystery of the burglary in the Zemindár's house was sufficiently explained to be understood by his mother. The hints of the *Surburákár*, that Monohur was probably himself at the bottom of the whole affair, had staggered, but not convinced her, for a mother does not so easily surrender her own impressions of an only son. But things began to look very ugly

when Monohur was nowhere to be found. Why did he not come home from his morning excursion, as before? Where could he be lurking? Had anything happened to him? The mother's heart was torn with anguish and misery by her doubts and fears; and bitter, bitter were the complaints she made of the unkindness of her son.

"Why was Monohur harassing her in that manner?" asked she. "Why was so much weight laid on her shoulders? Why was she alone to be so miserable while others equally placed in life were so happy?"

As we all complain in our misery, regarding ourselves to be the most unhappy of all beings, so complained the heavy-laden mother of her fate.

"Every body has deserted me!" cried she in her agony; "else would not Monohur have



left me and vanished from my sight. I wish I could die now, for I have nothing more to live for. O God, have pity on me, for my burden is getting much heavier than I can bear !”

Her repinings were at their height when the *Surburákár* approached her apartment one morning to announce something that had happened which he considered it of importance for her to know. He looked embarrassed as he entered the room, for he was doubtful how the information he had to communicate might affect a mind already overborne by its fears.

“ But there is no help for it,” murmured he to himself. “ She must be told of everything as it turns up, that under present circumstances being by far the best course to follow ;” and he stood his ground firmly to do his devoir.

“What is the matter, Nilkant?” asked the lady, almost starting from her seat the moment her eyes fell on her *Surburákár*. “What do you mean by gliding into my room in that pondering mood?”

“O, mother, I come only to announce that our servant Seeboo Sing, who was endeavouring to escape from this place, has been captured by one of our Chowkeydárs, with a bundle on his head.”

“Has he been caught with any portion of the property that has been missing? and does he know where Monohur now is?”

“I had no time to make any inquiries myself, lady. The Chowkeydár is bragging so much of what he has achieved that no one else has any chance of being heard. But they are bringing up both the captor and his captive hither, and you will know everything from their own lips presently.”

The Chowkeydár's story, relieved of its verbiage was this:—A comrade of his, named Mirzá Shebán Beg, had occasion to proceed from Thánnáh Ghyeghátty to Jágooleá, and took a cooly to carry his baggage. They started together and drank spirits freely at the different grog-shops on the road, and Shebán Beg became so much the worse for it that the Chowkeydár, in passing by the same road a short time after, saw him lying on the way-side naked and insensible. As the baggage and the cooly were not there he went forward in search of them, and, after a hard run, came up to a man who was carrying a bundle on his head, who, on being challenged, dropped the bundle and made off towards the rice-fields to effect his escape. But the Chowkeydár ran like a greyhound after a deer, and soon caught him by the throat; and here were both the greyhound and the deer.

“Was the bundle dropped by the man identified with the baggage of Mirzá Shebán Beg ?” asked Nilkant.


“No ; for the man I got hold of was not the cooly engaged by my comrade, but the Zemindár’s servant, Seeboo.”

“Well, what did he say to you ? Did he say why he was running away ?”

“He uttered a tissue of mere lies and contradictions, saying successively, that the bundle on his head did not belong to him ; that it did belong to him in one way, having been confided to his keeping by the person to whom it belonged ; and that he did not care to tell anything more about it to me.”

“All this has nothing to do with our affair, Nilkant,” said the Zemindár’s mother impatiently. “Does Seeboo Sing now say why he was running away hence, and where his master has gone to ?”

“O mother,” said the Chowkeydár, taking out the answer from the *Surburákár’s* mouth, “I was coming presently to those very points, for I opened Seeboo’s bundle by force on finding his answers to be so evasive and unsatisfactory, and what should I see in it but several silver articles which could not possibly have belonged to him, such as a silver tumbler, a silver *recáb*, a silver *pándán*, and the like. ‘To whom do these articles belong?’ asked I of him, and he answered, ‘To my master.’ ‘How then come they to be in your possession instead of being in his house?’ ‘He has left them with me.’ ‘Wherefore should he have done so? He has plenty of place in his own house to put them in.’ ‘He is not in his own house at present, and that is the reason that I also am going away from it.’ ‘Where is he now then?’ ‘How can I



say ? I was not asked to watch his movements.' ”

“ Ah, Nilkant, all this is perfectly unintelligible to me. The refusal of the man to answer the most important of the questions that were put to him seems to me to be more fearful even than his revelations. I don't want to ask him anything myself ; I don't think I could endure even to see him. Take him away with you, and try to get out of him any tidings he may have of Monohur. I don't want to know more about the lost property. It was the savings of many years, and was meant to give my son a fair start in life. But, since—since—there is so much mystery about its disappearance, I don't want the veil to be removed. Only let me know where Monohur is at this moment, and how he is to be brought back.”

Seeboo Sing was removed from the ante-room of the lady's apartment, and Nilkant, an old Zemindár's man, knew better how to deal with him than any mere Chowkeydár. His children, Gooná and Chooliá, a boy and a girl, were brought out of his house by order of the *Surburákár*, and were placed before him tied together by the hair.

"Shall we plunge both these children together in the Bhetná, Seeboo, or will you tell us the little—very little—that you would not tell to the Chowkeydár?"

"What is it that you want to know?"

"Where is the Zemindár now, and the bulk of the property that was stolen?"

"What do I know, sir? How can I tell?"

"To the point, Seeboo, if you want to save your children. You know me of old, and I shall surely consign them both to the

bottom of the river if I don't get a prompt and truthful reply."

"Why then, the Zemindár is with the Ferázees, and his property with him. They want to fight the English, and the Zemindár has had to find the money for the enterprise."

"You can go home now with your children, Seeboo. I have no further questions to ask."

And with a heavy heart the *Surburákár* went back to his mistress's apartment, to impart to her the awful news which he had himself long previously anticipated.

"The boy has gone clean mad then," said the poor mother with a sigh from her heart; and she sank on her cushion shivering convulsively, and remained for some time in a state of utter unconsciousness.

The explosion of the Ferázee affair was known all over Bengal within a few days

after, and this forced the lady to get up from her bed to have her son searched for in every direction ; but all her endeavours were fruitless, for he was not to be found. From this time everything went wrong with her ; she heeded nothing ; took no part even in her Zemindáry affairs, which she had always diligently attended to ever since her husband's death. For whole days she would sit down at one place, almost without moving ; and, as the prospect of seeing her son became more and more remote, the gloaming of her mind deepened, and, from having been at one time a most active and intelligent specimen of her sex, she soon dwindled down into an almost imbecile state.

“ You are just killing yourself, lady,” said Nilkant, “ and without any certain cause. My impression is that Monohur, having got


free of control, has rushed forth to see the world; and I am certain that he will return to us as soon as he gets tired of his whim."

"That would be a hopeful anticipation indeed if I could persuade my mind to accept it; but, O, Nilkant, my fears will not allow me to do so."

"But why, why should you allow your fears to master your judgment? Be as strong-minded, lady, as you showed yourself before under a yet greater affliction. Never was there more need for strength than now, for your senses are reeling."

"I know that, Nilkant. My fears are killing me."

"But what is it that you fear? Let me only know what shape your alarm has taken and I shall be able to judge whether it is



really so well-grounded as you seem to suppose ? ”

“ This then,” answered the lady, getting up from her seat : “ Monohur has been seen with the *Fakir*, *Sunyási*, or whatever the man may really be, after the explosion of the Ferázee revolt. We all know that, for the most part, these *Fakirs* and *Sunyásis* are monsters of the worst type. They affect to be incarnations of the deity, but are in truth incarnate fiends. Monohur has money with him, and poisoning has become a recognised system now all over our country, as Thuggism is in the North-west. What so likely then but for this same *Fakir*, or others acting at his instigation, to give that potion to Monohur which, by depriving him of life, would enable them to get off with his wealth ? ”

“ I assure you, lady, that your fears are groundless. You well know that I never had

a liking for the *Sunyási* or *Fakir* before ; but I have since ascertained that he bears a most excellent character, and has a large share of sound common-sense, notwithstanding that his principles are misdirected. He is, in fact, the brother of our priest at the temple of Nággesur Mahádeva. He will do no harm to Monohur, though, when going wrong himself from an error of judgment, he will, of course, carry his *protégé* along with him. As for money, Monohur has none with him now. All the wealth of Boná Ghát was spent in maturing the Nárkelberíáh revolt ; and, even if he had money with him, the *Sunyási* is too wide-awake for either poisoner or Thug to operate against them."

"I trust it may be as you say, Nilkant. I could die peaceably now if I but saw my Monohur's face once more ?"

"Then live upon that hope, lady. There

is no reason to conclude that Monohur will not return to us again."


The mother's heart beat fast, and she tried to reason herself into the same belief with her manager, but could not. A presentiment of evil had come over her which she was unable to shake off, and she sank back to her seat with a groan.

CHAPTER XIX.

INUNDATION, FAMINE, PESTILENCE, AND DEATH.

THE inundation of 1833 will long be remembered in the annals of Bengal for the distress caused by it in several places, and especially in various parts of the district of 24 Pergunnáhs. The floods originated with the heavy rains in the Sub-Himálayan ranges, which were largely supplemented by continued wet weather throughout the country. In 24 Pergunnáhs in particular there had been incessant rain for not less than three months, whereby all the lowlands in it were laid under water, which the river-channels, already suffering from their own accessions, were utterly inadequate to carry off.

The rising of the rivers was very rapid, while some of them were affected besides by a peculiar bore, called the "Harpa," which carried away everything before it, drowning large numbers of men and cattle, and scavenger animals, such as dogs and jackals. This was especially the case with the Bhetná, and the sufferings caused thereby in Boná Ghát and the surrounding country were fearful. The alarm was quickly raised when the bore was seen to be coming; but it came on quicker than the villagers could fly, and whole families were swept away by it from their homes. In some places the water rose to the height of seven feet above the ground, and the people who were able to save themselves did so by occupying the upper branches of large and strong trees, the roofs of *puccá* houses, and the *chuppurs* of straw and tiled



huts; or by floating on rafts, canoes, and boats, where they were able to catch them. The danger was so great that the most noxious animals and reptiles were rendered inoffensive by it. The cobra warmed itself by nestling close to the suckling mother; the wolf looked askance at but dared not molest the goat and sheep standing by his side. The horrors of the visitation were further augmented by a tremendous hurricane, which lasted a whole night, and uprooted many of the trees on which the poorer families had taken refuge; and, unforeseeing such contingency, many unfortunate people were killed at the very moment that they were congratulating themselves on their escape from the inundation. In almost all places whole families were without food for some three or four days, and when, the waters did

subside, the impossibility of finding anything to live upon forced many persons to commit suicide. "I am going to seek for food for all of us," was the plea put forth by many a father when bolting away from his family to avoid seeing the distress he could not relieve; and many a mother, tormented by the cries of her starving progeny, became so frantic as to destroy them, and then dashed out her own brains, not to survive those who were dearest to her.

The mother of Monohur had a particularly heavy time in connection with these sufferings, as being sore at heart at a juncture when she was called upon to do justice to the heavy responsibility devolving on her. Many a battle is fought in private life which leaves but little trace for the careless chronicler to note upon, and such a battle had she to fight,

and did fight with a stout and bursting heart. She applied herself to the duties of her position with an assiduity and singleness of purpose that called forth the honest praises of everybody who had an opportunity of knowing what she was doing.

“Give everything to everybody liberally, Nilkant,” said she to her *Surburákár*. “Stint not. All, all we have, is to be given away to those who are suffering. O, Monohur, where are you at this moment? Who shall assure me that some monstrous ‘Harpa’ has not swept away my son to the sea?” And in the midst of her large-hearted charity would the poor, forsaken woman be thus overcome by her fears, and lie down for hours as one bereft of motion.

“Rise, lady, rise! be what you ever were; be equal to the occasion which demands the

husbanding of all our energies. The country is not threatened with famine alone ; large gangs of men are moving through it armed with clubs and hatchets, breaking open and looting whatever they can lay hands upon, and the police are powerless against them."

Without a murmur, if not without a pang, would the lady rise forthwith after every such call, to work as bravely and unflinchingly as before, leaving, even on the *Surbarákár*, the impress of a superior mind by the lucid and appropriate orders she gave him to carry out.

"If we have robbers now to contend with, Nilkant, you must get our men together, and employ even the plunderers themselves in our service, and pay them, and feed them, and bid them protect our ryots from depredation. The greatness of our ancestors was

given to them in trust only. In the day of their trouble the poor have a right to our protection and assistance, and must have both." And well did the afflicted lady, drying her tears, follow up her words by her acts, by protecting the hapless, and by setting up all those who had broken down by rendering timely assistance to them in rebuilding or repairing their houses, drying up their grains, and securing supplies of other food and clothing.

Dreadful were the troubles which were thus encountered and overcome; but there were more yet to pass through. After the waters had subsided, after lawlessness was put down, after the immediate demands of hunger and nakedness were satisfied and provided for, there came forth another enemy more difficult to contend with than

either inundation or famine. Disease in the shapes of cholera and fever set in, both of the worst type, and originating apparently from rotten crops and foetid slime ; and they were so widely spread in a short time that the few who were not attacked could do little to relieve the many who were. Even against this enemy did the lady of Boná Ghát fight most willingly and courageously to begin with, sending out *Kobirájes* and medicines in every direction, and assistance of every description that was wanted. But the excitement was too much for her enfeebled frame. Unsoothed in mind and unrefreshed in body she had laboured so strenuously as to get thoroughly exhausted ; and she was now stricken down by a fever which bereft her of what little strength had hitherto remained to her.

“ You are looking very ill, lady ; you have

over-exerted yourself, and must take rest—rest both of body and of mind.”

“Rest ! what rest ? If you mean sleep, I can get none of it ; or, if there be any at times, it does not refresh me.”

“Nor will it if you continue to torture your mind as you have done so continuously. O, lady, remember that, if anything goes wrong with you, everything will go wrong with the household and the estate.”

The lady raised her eyes towards the face of her *Surburákár*, as if she wished to understand the meaning of his words fully.

“Ah, you are trying to frighten me, Nilkant ; but nothing surely has gone wrong with me yet. It is only the cramped atmosphere around us that chokes me. O, that we had a breath of fresh air now to dissipate this suffocating closeness.”

“No, lady, I would not alarm you for the

world. But you look pale, and your eyes are restless, and, if you are not suffering from illness, you must be suffering from exhaustion."

Her eyes had the weary, hopeless, and restless expression which tells clearly of a heart that is comfortless and breaking; but, besides that, there was also an unaccountable pallor on her face, unaccountable if she had really no illness to complain of, as she said.

"I have no bodily ailment to speak of, Nilkant," repeated she once more. "I feel weaker surely—much weaker indeed than I have ever felt before; but have we not worked harder for some time now than is our wont? And does not that account for the loss of strength fully?"

She maintained over and over again that nothing ailed her; but the evidence of her

face was unmistakable, and became more and more striking day by day, till the fever developed itself with delirium, which was at times so wild that they had the greatest difficulty in keeping her to her bed. The one only idea that haunted her now was that her son was hiding himself from her, and all her struggles and ravings were for reaching him.

“He is not dead. It is not so bad as that. He has been wheedled away from me. He is willing to come back now, but they will not allow him. I see him frequently passing by me; but a dense cloud comes invariably between us which I cannot penetrate. O, Nilkant, why hast thou removed my son from me, my handsome and noble-hearted boy? Why wont you allow him to come back to his mother’s arms?”

“ Be calm, lady ; be patient for the love of God, and I will tell you all I know of him. I am labouring day and night to bring him back to you ; and he shall come back if you will only bear up till I am able to bring him hither.”

The face of the lady was now illuminated by an unutterable expression of gratitude, and, while her heart beat rapidly with expectation, the delirium she was suffering from was checked momentarily, as if by magic.

“ Have you heard of Monohur lately, Nilkant ? Have you got any certain tidings of his whereabouts yet ? ”

“ Yes, lady ; they are vague scraps only at present, but still the tidings are such as should reassure your mind. You were afraid lest he should have suffered from the inundations that visited us, but my informant

writes that, when last seen, he was in the high and dry lands of Western Bengal, and not in any of the countries which were flooded."

"But in what direction was he going? Could not any of your messengers overtake him?"

"No; for as yet he is ahead of my men, who are only following in his trail; and the tortuous line he is tracking makes it impossible at times to keep up the pursuit."

A thick, impenetrable cloud was forming in the western sky, and the Zemindár's mother looked intently at it, as if her eyes would pierce through its inky veil to seek for her truant son.

"O, Monohur! even in the land beyond yon cloud will my spirit seek for and find thee. Nilkant, I am dying."

“Dying!” exclaimed the *Surburákár*, as he hastened to take hold of her cold hands to feel for her pulse. “Ah, poor lady! she is gone already—killed by her son!”

The lady was dead indeed; but she had not taken off her eyes from the western cloud. Her soul had leaped out in that direction, and the eyes were gazing fixedly as before.

END OF VOL. I.



